THE SINGING OF THE FUTURE

D. F. FRANGCON-DAVIES

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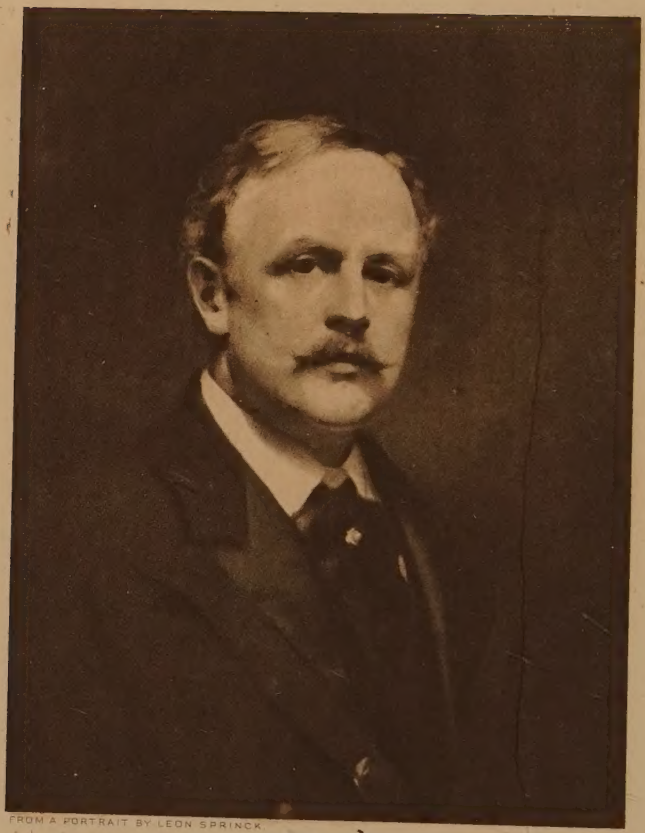

FROM A PORTRAIT BY LEON SPRINCK

Yours faithfully

David Arnagcon-Davies

THE SINGING OF THE FUTURE

BY DAVID FFRANGCON-DAVIES, M. A. OXON. WITH A PREFACE BY SIR EDWARD ELGAR, KNT., MUS. DOC.

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TO THE MEMORY OF
MY FATHER AND MOTHER
DAFYDD AND GWEN

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PREFACE

"THE soul which has seen most of truth shall come to the birth as a philosopher, or artist, or some musical and loving nature." I do not now follow Socrates [1] into his subsequent divisions; for the moment it is enough that, as one who "has seen most of truth," he has included the Musician: and in this rich-sounding word I include all—composers, executants and critics alike—who labour, not for any selfish ends, but for the good of the art of music.

But musicians have not always shewn to the world, when their works have come to the birth, that they have seen the most of truth. The art easily lends itself to make passing amusement for the frivolous and the unthinking; in this there is nothing to deplore: we should rather rejoice in knowing that music can be an amusement, for it, in itself, is never ignoble; this it can only be when allied to unworthy words or to degrading spectacle. The manysidedness of an art is a chief joy to its possessors, but the ineptitudes, and worse, of the creators of the material on which executants and critics live, have too frequently tended to degrade the two last-named in the exercise of their duties in their branches of the complete art. But

[1] Phædrus,—(Jowett).

with composers and critics and instrumental executants we need not now concern ourselves; although it may be profitably read by all musicians, this book is mainly for singers. I will add, for all singers; certainly for all those proposing to sing, and certainly for many who have already embarked upon their professional careers.

With the march of time, and with it the improvement of musical education, a new desire has possessed us,—the desire to *understand*. The desire has brought with it the interpreters we need. True, they are few in number and their array is meagre compared with the ample numbers and amiable affluence of the popular vocalists; but those who have "the most of truth" are with us all the same, working, striving, and above all, singing. Where in former days the vocalist entered upon his task with a lighthearted assurance that all the old "points" would meet with unquestioning acceptance, the singer of the present day has to think as behoves a responsible artist. In circles of lesser value the modern ballad, with its unanalysable inanities, is still accepted as a recognisable form of art, but our better singers, —our real interpreters and our teachers—have long ceased to affront their own intelligence by presenting the rubbish demanded by the uneducated for their pleasant degradation.

This book is a serious appeal to the singer, especially to the English-speaking singer, and I welcome it and hope for much real and lasting good from its dissemination. Written with complete knowledge by a singer

who is also an artist it forms a worthy portion, or it may be at this date a commencement, of that long desired new edifice of English music which will some day be raised by those, and by those only, who have seen the "most of truth."

EDWARD ELGAR.

HEREFORD, December, 1904.

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INTRODUCTION

This book is meant, not only for singers, but for all who are interested and concerned in the subject of speech or song—preachers, readers, pleaders, lecturers, reciters (with or without music), and actors —all of whom do their best work when they employ their best selves upon the best products of the best poets, dramatists, and musicians. Our book deals also with the subject of daily speech, which is in truth the foundation of all artistic and, in the good sense, utilitarian utterance. He who *talks* best (*qua* speech) will, other things being equal, read, plead, recite, preach, lecture, sing, and act best.

Aristotle defines "Happiness" as the state of "A Soul at work in accordance with supreme virtue in a complete life."

The good artist fulfils the conditions of this definition; and the good artist is the happy one.

London, D. Ff-D.

Christmas Eve, 1904.

PART I

What is Singing?

CHAPTER I

WHAT IS SINGING?

Definition based on wide outlook necessary.—Singing not a monopoly.—Temperament not all-sufficient.—Present inquiry based on history of singing, ancient and modern, and on personal experience.—Indefinite and insufficient comments on singing.—Singing described as "a sustained talking on a tune."—Amateur, "ballady," and "natural" singing.—What *is* "natural"?—Singing not wholly lachrymose or humorous, but objectively characteristic and versatile.—Characteristic *versus* "pleasant" appearance.—Universal *versus* particular expression.—"Voice-production" and Monotony.

"Lenzes Gebot, die süsse Noth
Die legt es ihm in die Brust,
Nun sang er wie er musst,
Und wie er musst, so konnt er's,
Das merkt ich ganz besonders."

Hans Sachs ("Die Meistersinger").

WHAT IS SINGING? (A slight accent on the verb to mark one's sense of wonder.) Many marshes and many Will-o'-the-Wisps have bewildered and led the traveller astray. Though there be honest workers, following art for the love of it, who have laboured with good results, still a definition such as the average man may adopt with credit and advantage cannot fail to be useful. All teachers and students of the Art of Song are consciously or unconsciously, definition-seekers; and to them belongs, of right, the gratitude of all who would deserve the title "artist." Art never

belittles—but sees the good as well as the bad in every effort. True it is, that certain opinions, the very essence of which makes them subversive of the singer's highest good, are apt to make us forget that large charity, without which all effort is vain. We can, however, differentiate between principles, and persons who hold them.

A full study of the voice would demand very accurate thinking and wide culture—results of excursions into fields of psychic, no less than physical, activity. Music and singing are a united territory, ruled over by intellect and soul, and reached by way of the senses. To combine healthy metaphysical insight and scientific accuracy in one pronouncement on vocal art, would appear to be a rare achievement. Even when men like Ruskin, Emerson, and Tolstoi have turned aside to discuss musical questions generally, their lack of precise musical knowledge has somewhat weakened their arguments. Again, composers too often seem to think that vocal art is an affair beyond their comprehension, that singing is a monopoly, and that it can never be anything else. They permit statements—the most absurd—to pass unchallenged, as though voice-production were a science which need not, like other sciences, abide by intelligent, artistic, and progressive judgment. Plenary inspiration is claimed in regard to this science, tone is worshipped as a fetich, and confusion of doctrine prevails. When a composer's intelligence is startled by some extraordinarily extravagant dogma in the voice-producer's creed, he usually mutters, as

he beats a hasty retreat: "Oh, well, I don't know anything about the voice."

The present writer has endeavoured to put his experience into such a form as some abler brain than his may eventually use for the advancement of the singer and his art, so that they may conform to, and not dissent from, the art of the composer.

Now, voice, and the singing instinct—regarded from the physical point of view—are comparatively scarce. But they are plentiful enough (if men gave greater heed to their psychic powers) to supply us with a far larger number of lasting and suggestive types of singers than we now possess. The singing instinct is more general, and musical ability more latently plentiful than many of us imagine, as witness the behaviour of an audience under the influence of a Reeves or a Joachim. The germ is there; the step between appreciation and performance is not insurmountable; and, as musical appreciation is more general than is usually supposed, so also is vocal power. Given a fairly keen sense of pitch and rhythm, in other words, modest musical intuition and capacity for work, singing becomes a mere matter of practical development, under the guidance of linguistic and imaginative thought.[1]

The alleged fact that "the world has always been

[1] Without doubt, special endowments exist. What is suggested is this:—Voices and vocal ability are easily accounted for, as will, it is hoped, presently become clear in this volume. "A voice is the gift of God"; *so are the predisposing causes of voice.* Cultivate these and voice follows.

ruled by the emotions" is no argument for continuing the sovereignty; especially as the word "emotion" means so little to the average man. Sensuous frenzy and nervous excitement are very necessary in their place, but they are not the whole of art; nor is hypnotic vocal power the whole of singing—which must be histrionic, pictorial, plastic, as well as temperamental. If a life of varied experience has made the elements necessary for a singer's equipment fairly clear to the present writer, in this book will be found some results of mental struggles undergone in the endeavour to find such a voice as would reflect the mind in its workings. The period of probation has lasted some seventeen years, and the growth of ideas has been slow. The manner in which these have been presented here may seem somewhat emphatic; if so, the writer trusts he may be forgiven. We all find it difficult to detach us from our age, and are therefore, ourselves, when disposed to disagree with it, not over-easily convinced. Some emphasis, accordingly, a man must have.

What, then, is singing? A consideration of what we know of ancient and modern song, as well as an analysis of the writer's experience while in pursuit of voice, and dominion over it, will help us to a definition.

It has been said that "singing is a sustained talking on a tune." This is a commendably plain statement; its value would have been increased, had the author supplemented it by others suggestive of the poet, the philosopher, and the artist. The ground is overrun

by empiric theories, and "too much of that which men say of voice culture is indefinite." [1] How often the principle which underlies technique is lost in a multiplicity of details; and how seldom we are favoured with an all-embracing law which we can seize upon and carry about with us! Singing-primers, with their scales and exercises, fail to realise the value of organic principles tending to promote safe growth. Scales, like razors, are useful to those who can handle them; but in inexperienced hands they are dangerous. "Singing is a sustained talking on a tune," helps the student to a clear view at the start. Keeping this in mind he gives a simple and a fairly convincing reading of a song. This type of singing has its value; true, its fault is "amateurishness"; but it not infrequently happens that amateurs can give a juster reading of a piece of vocal music than many a professional. A cultured amateur will often, with a voice of limited quantity, give a better balanced reading of the text. Plenitude of voice does not always ensure plenitude of brains. It would even appear that the possession of the former tends to minimise the desire for the cultivation of the latter. When to the possession of a large and telling organ, a fair amount of intelligence is added, and when, moreover, the sensuously pathetic appeal is present in the voice, the result is that a class of singing finds a vogue similar to that of ballad-singers. They "talk on a tune," and so get at the hearts of their audience —whatever may be said of their brains.

[1] Cf. M. S. Saëns, in his endorsement of M. Anatole Piltan's book.

Yet, while exponents of this school go far, they do not go far enough. They lack *the sustaining line*,[1] which appears only when unity of impression succeeds diversity of expression, *i.e.*, when one whole picture takes the place of a series of sketches, or—one had almost said—splashes of colour. Now this "ballady" singing, *i.e.*, "sustained (in one sense) talking on a tune," is often called "natural"—a misleading term; for that which appears, on the face of it, to be "natural" to a large majority, will often prove on examination to be most un-natural. Perhaps it might simplify matters if the word "common" were substituted for the word "natural." It is not edifying to note the average definition given to this term. What *is* natural, and what un-natural? That which is natural to one is not natural to another—heredity and surroundings affecting the issue to a large extent. Is the natural[2] (in the popular sense) always or even ever right, desirable, artistic? What is to be the touchstone, what the standard from which there can be no appeal? Surely not individual taste or tendency, physical or psychic; not personal partiality or prejudice; not the wishes or desires of one man or of one school; not the particular, but the uni-

[1] When we speak of "*line*," we mean that, mentally and vocally, words and notes *hang* together (so to speak), with the result that, instead of hearing disjointed notes, we hear sustained phrases. This process is educative, and reacts on man's intelligence, so that we finally hear not merely disjointed phrases, but a complete unit. The serial character of the performance is discounted, and every song becomes a perfectly rounded and homogeneous product.

[2] Cf. Chap. V., pp. 49–52.

versal. All phenomena in the way of opinions, those of the individual as well as those of a class, must be compared and contrasted, and their one common denominator discovered. In other words the student will examine all phenomena, eliminate non-essentials, and weld the remainder into Law. That which remains is "natural," so far as it goes, until fresh discoveries make a change in the definition necessary. This residue will be found to be simple, bearing the stamp of unity, form, and comprehensiveness. All who possess normal senses and intellect, and have secured for themselves due poise by means of culture, possess also the faculty of discernment as to what is "natural" and what is not. And yet, caution must be exercised lest we come to a narrow decision; for manifestations of the natural, as well as signs of men's discernment of it, vary in degree, if not in kind, according to conditions of climate, heredity and environment. These two principles, viz., perception of the natural, together with varying manifestations of it, lead insensibly to the principles of criticism and selection; so that, finally, national no less than individual tendencies have to be called in question, and the history of cosmic development appealed to, in order to decide what is really natural, and what is really not. For the evolution and the preservation of the highest good work as an unvarying law of nature, and, accordingly, everything in the kingdom of "natural" manifestation must be referred to this principle for judgment.

For the seeker after artistic truth,[1] it is eminently wise and scientific to discover the highest pronouncements of the highest representative groups of human beings, so that he may enrich his own view with the views of those who have touched high water mark in the world's achievements. He will, in orderly and intelligent fashion, dispassionately, under nature's guidance, omit nothing which will help to create a comprehensive art type; into the composition of which he will allow nothing to enter which would interfere with its essence, and its universal and reproductive character. Nor is it to be objected here that it is a superhuman task to determine how often the world has brought forth a universal *world-art fabric*. The task is possible to those who hold the balance true between the "how" and the "what" in Art, *and* the "why." Co-ordinate, is superior to unduly serial

[1] Prophets—men who love truth—are a necessity in Art as well as in Religion; they are also inevitable. The earnest student will not bow to popular judgments. It is often said "the people are always right." This is only true in a sense which begs the question; "the people are never right" is nearer the truth. Let it be conceded that the highest ideals *finally* triumph in public estimation; yet the time taken by the public to realise the greatness of objective art emphasises the zeal and educative power of individual performers rather than the innate perspicacity of the masses. Public judgment is by no means conclusive as to the "naturalness" of a performance. The greatest and most "natural" presentation is not always greeted with the loudest applause. If obvious distortion be avoided, and the commonplace and conventional presented with unction, the public is well content—until they see the natural, the undistorted, and the simple, set upon the scene. One would almost venture to say that in Art "the obvious" is very seldom right.

thinking. And though the art-products of different localities and ages may with justice be styled comparatively or locally artistic and natural, yet their absolute formfulness and permanent value are questionable. For example, the sensuous frenzy of a Spaniard or Italian may be natural enough to them, and valuable in the scheme of things. Let, however, the conventional, every-day Italian or Spaniard attack an aria by Bach, and there would be murder "most foul and unnatural."

But at this point, we may with advantage eschew all semblance of pretty dialectics, and apply ourselves to the simple matters which may be held to be effective in any thoughtful singer's career. At the outset the student is stirred, by the singing instinct, to deal with the product of poets and musicians, men of cunning in the use of language and sound, some ancient, some modern. And with the survival of the musical treasures of the past, there has also come down to us a certain spirit in which they are to be approached—a spirit which arises out of the poetic and musical knowledge acquired by mankind. What could be more natural and rational than that a student should convey from his own to other brains all he has absorbed of poets' and musicians' creations, in the manner best suited to make the composers' intentions clear? All who are serious students start from one point, viz., that the individual is a responsible unit in the world; that he is a means to an end, as well as an end in himself; that everything which by surviving has proved its right to live, is meant for edification;

and that accordingly all fine creations demand perpetuation. The singer must therefore be the middleman, and he will seek to convey the creations of genius in such a way that the listener is enabled to hear and feel, fundamentally, what author and composer felt when placing their creations on record. This is an unvarying canon of interpretation. But if he attain to a fairly just combination, viz., the amalgamated result of text and music (such result being, in its making and products, in accord with the principles of literary and musical art), the singer may be said to have arrived at the goal of his endeavours; for this, in a broad sense, is "singing." [1]

Guided therefore by universal experience, by mankind's culminative methods in pursuit of knowledge and its fruits. and by the results of those methods, we now recognise as natural elements [2] in music and singing:—

a. The poet's power, seen in choice and handling of subject, and proved by the form of the text.

b. The musician's power, seen in choice and treatment of poet's text, and proved by the music's artistic fitness.

c. The singer's power, seen in his full sympathy with the subjects, methods, and aims of various

[1] We may specify, in addition, the singer's technique, though that might well be said to be included in the "principles of musical art."

[2] Elements harmonising with nature as a whole. Cf. Chap. V., p. 49.

schools of poets and musicians, and proved by his progressive style.

These are the essence, the "ego" of singing, and may be said to be the things which tend to make the Singer's Art what it ought to be. On the other hand there are things which tend to make it what it ought not to be. Some would make singing all tears; others, all smiles; some would have it all hypnotism; others, all intellect.

Now a false note is struck when a teacher's standpoint is the importation of "the tear into the voice." Heavens! the tyranny of these tears! Its morbid and lachrymose objects would soon convert the sturdy, wholesome, and sanely cheerful creatures of the God of Light, into invertebrate and atrophied crawlers along caves of darkness. There may be a reason for the existence of such a school, perhaps not unconnected with the fact that tears repressed are a marketable commodity with those who cater for public entertainment.

Then again others insist that the most important matter is that a singer should "look nice" when singing. Entertainment promoters make a great point of a "nice appearance." Nay, the student need not fear that we desire to spoil his beauty—we ask him to preserve it; but this he cannot do if the starting point be the pursing up of the features into the semblance of a smile. If you depend on the evolution of your character to manage the look on your face, we shall have some nature in it, as well as in

your voice, and not the grin and mimetic note of our Simian ancestor. Possessors of "telling" voices and of engaging personalities are apt to depend on these entirely; while those who have a strong intellectual bent use it to the exclusion of all legitimate, personally hypnotic beauty, or charm of voice. There cannot be any doubt, that it is a prodigious error to take one fixed idea, tragic or comic, and to make that a basis for a student's training. He who makes his voice the tool of any one sentiment (even though that sentiment be a safe investment) commits a crime against his voice, nay, against his character, and against nature.

Singers classify themselves according to supposed limitations; each finds his *mètier* and lives up to, and on it. Any singer, of ordinary physique and mind, should be able to delineate clearly any character. "Such and such a rôle does not suit me," is a statement which one often hears: it is marked by indolence and apathy; for *any rôle* within a singer's vocal range should "suit" an Artist. To some of us, at all events, it is clear that varied and even universal expression is the only kind of work to which any person of common-sense would care to devote his life. "*Bel-canto*" (of which we read so much) meant, and means, versatility of tone; if a man wish to be called an *artist*, his voice must become the instrument of intelligent imagination. Perhaps there would be fewer cases of vocal-specialising if the modern craze for "voice-production" (apart from linguistic truth) could be reduced. This wondrous pursuit is, as

things stand, a notable instance of putting the cart before the horse. Voices are "produced" and "placed" in such wise that pupils are trained to "vocalise" (to use technical jargon) the words; *i.e.*, they are taught to make a sound which is indeed *something like* but is not the word in its purity. "Tone" or sound is what the average student seeks, *ab initio*, and not verbal purity. Hence the monotony of modern singing. When one hears an average singer in one rôle, one hears him in all. Many modern singers do not characterise. This charge would be inadmissible if they breathed properly, and spoke the words with correct atmosphere; nor would it be possible in such a case to accuse them of pretentious or fictitious pronunciation and expression.

CHAPTER II

WHAT IS SINGING? (CONTINUED)

Bel-canto not a school of sensuously pretty voice-production.—*A priori* argument from history.—Vocal efficiency depends on musical content.—Language the real source of voice.—Incorrect theories concerning *bel-canto*.—Voice the servant of brain.—Modern singing based on a false notion, viz., that the phonetics of singing are necessarily different to those of speech.

AT an early point in his public career the writer enjoyed the privilege of visiting the United States of America in a professional capacity. During this and subsequent visits he learnt many valuable lessons; but he discovered that some (not all) Transatlantic writers sought to demonstrate that the art of *bel-canto* was concerned with *mere prettiness* of voice. To use the term "beauty" of voice would be to confound the issue, for apparently no satisfactory definition of this term can be found. Broadly speaking, *sensuous* beauty, or, as we are justified in calling it, "*prettiness*," is what people mean when they say that *bel-canto* had to do with "beauty" of voice. It has come to be a generally recognised thing that voice, pure and simple, by its very composition, or "placing," [1] interferes with the organs of speech; making it impossible for a vocalist to preserve absolute pu-

[1] The process of "placing" voices results too often in their being put on the shelf, where they are indeed useless.

rity of pronunciation in song as well as in speech. It is because of this view that the principle of "vocalising" words, instead of musically *saying* them, crept in, to the detriment of vocal art. This false position is due to the idea that the "*Arte del bel-canto*" encouraged mere sensuous beauty of voice, rather than truth of expression. And yet it was a very seriously pursued study, this *Arte del bel-canto*. Surely, on the face of it, *bel-cantists* must have concerned themselves with something higher than mere sensuous "beauty of voice and vocal plastics."

An exact school of singing, such as the Italian can be proved to have been, would scarcely have been established for the purpose of inventing a new sort of keyed instrument.[1] We learn that the Florentine reformers, in their desire to enable the *Dramatis Personæ* to make a personal appeal, superseded the many voices by the one voice in Opera. This very reform must have had a benign effect upon the study of the voice, making it more rational—consequently better adapted to produce truthful organs. The *crux* of *bel-cantists* was the prevention of an escape of breath. Any one who has tried, knows how difficult this is, and knows also that as soon as proper control is established, the tone becomes at once correlative to the meaning of the word—articulation and diction of rare purity being finally the result. We are all aware that "beauty" is inherent to the Italian ideal of Art. Moreover, during the seventeenth century, there was

[1] Berlioz wittily alluded to the later and degenerate successors of true *bel-cantists* as "performers on the larynx."

great musical and operatic activity in Venice, Bologna, and Milan; and the impetus given to "truth of expression" by Peri and other reformers (when they made the vocal adaptation of the text conform to ordinary Italian speech) must have affected the teaching of *bel-canto* which flourished in Bologna early in the eighteenth century. Add to this the Florentine love of colour, the predisposition of Italians to "long-vowel" singing, and the character of Cavalli's music, which was dramatic and aimed at verisimilitude, and we have—in the times which led up to those of the first *bel-canto* schools—elements making for truth of expression, and not for mere vocal plasticity and so-called "beauty." The men and women of those days would presumably sing like reasonable beings, and not like musical puppets, and we have seen that there was a predisposition toward truthfulness in vocal matters.

Previous to the seventeenth century, the reform which Palestrina carried out in Church music (in the *kind* of music which could rightly be considered suitable to public worship) had prepared the way for the necessity of musical differentiation according to subject. The work which he accomplished could not fail to bring forth fruit in the way of producing a desire for appropriate colour when dealing vocally with different subjects, sacred and profane. A somewhat laboured contention, it may be said. *But is it so?* After all, the *germ of vocal efficiency lies in musical efficiency; the higher the latter, the higher the former is bound to become. It is not too much to say that, in*

general, the type of music will be reproduced in the type of voice it evolves.[1]

Pretence begets pretence, truth begets truth. With that into which some *bel-cantists* developed as the years went by we have little concern. The music which they sang without doubt affected their voices sensuously and made them agile. But their voices became their tyrants, and (otherwise composers like Wagner would have lived in vain) we, the vocalists of the twentieth century, must not take our cue from those who still cherish as their ideal, "sensuous beauty and agility of voice."[2] Our position is this: *voice must grow out of language, and singers must begin their studentship by singing* THOUGHTS. *The senses must not be allowed to tyrannise over the vocalists of the future, who will moreover show perfect correlative beauty and absolute agility of voice, resulting from linguistic or, if you will, literary purity.*

The thoughtful reader has noted that we are content to appeal to Nature, and to that great principle of hers in her struggle for the good of the race, viz., Natural Selection. In intention *bel-cantists* were probably correct at the start; in effect, however, they fell away, partly because of the class of work they were called upon to do. In our times, we are told, there is practically no *bel-canto*. If what is nowadays designated by that term be similar to that which is held

[1] Cf. Chap. IX. on Opera, p. 234.

[2] It is a highly significant fact that some vocalists famed for sensuous beauty of voice discontinue their attempts at Wagner-drama after one or two trials.

to have been the *bel-canto* of old, we really cannot grieve that we are in and of the twentieth, and not the eighteenth century. Artistically sane people do not now expect us to applaud as art that which belongs to the *genus* entertainment. But the times are young after all, and it was perhaps worth while to discover how "beautiful" the human voice could become in itself; now that we have duly learned that lesson, it is our privilege to begin to look upon it as the servant of the brain. This is what Wagner—and some others —have done for it.

To return to our inquiry. A writer on musical subjects in Boston, U. S. A., has claimed that the differentiation of emotions was reserved for vocalists of a day subsequent to that of the *bel-cantists*. This is pure conjecture. These singers knew something of love, hate, pity, scorn and the like. What kind of men and women can they have been who are assumed to have spoken and sung of love as though it were hate, of joy as though it were sorrow! Nay! Nature is orderly, reasonable, and unceasing in her efforts. If she cannot secure what she wants in one way, she will try another. But she is ever at work and she makes use of all that which she finds ready to her hand. Individual man's book-making, date-ascribing, and classification, useful though they be, are poor patchwork, when compared to the slowly evolved mosaic of Universal Nature. What we must realise is that Nature is always at work, nor did she stop in the days of *bel-canto*. True, she ought, perchance, to be making a great noise (as some of us do while at work),

so that men may know that she is there. But that is not her way; yet she is ever arranging some new branch-line [1] whereby a new country may be opened up, contiguous to that through which the main line passes.

One sometimes fears that the term *bel-canto* is in some quarters perilously near *hocus pocus;* it is often used as though it were *some preparation which singers apply to their voices—as ladies use unguents for their faces—to soften them!* Did *bel* mean anything further than *good* when used in conjunction with *canto?* And even if it meant "beautiful," ought a localised meaning to be binding upon all future generations? A Britisher's or an American's sense of beauty may eventually turn out to be perhaps far higher than that of a Venetian. Even if *bel* did once mean merely an agile, pretty voice, there is no need that we should be bound by inanities that are past and gone. Exact thinkers have ever looked with some amount of good-natured contempt upon musicians—upon vocalists especially, because of this very *pretty* madness. Singers and musicians are often held by clear-headed men of affairs to be specially emotionalised creatures, whose business it is to affect the nerve-centres pleasantly. If some one will only give us a definition of "beauty" and a respectable theory of Æsthetics, and then a digest of the social and religious thought-tendencies of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, we shall be able to talk rather more definitely about *bel-canto.*

[1] See page 29.

It has already been suggested that the rapid advance in operatic compositions from Peri and Monteverde to Purcell and Handel *must* have resulted in quick activity of vocal study. The melodic value of Handelian operatic airs could not fail to secure a fair share of vocal consistency and truth of expression. To the end that the music which vocalists had to deal with might be truthfully treated, the masters of the school at Bologna (1700) found that voices must undergo training for years on lines which have come down to us, and which will be amply, though simply, described later on in this volume. Meanwhile, we shall do well to assume that, at the start of the school, the ideal was pure, and that the imbecility which overtook vocalists and public later on, had not begun to show itself. They were probably sane enough not to *separate the phonetics of the singing voice from those of speech*.[1] When the very mastery over the voice (divorced from pure speech) became a snare, and the school of Rossini, Donizetti, and Bellini wrote down to suit the "vocalising" tendencies of the day, there probably ensued a period in which operatic *bel-cantists* lost sight of the pure ideal they once possessed; and this may have given rise to the contention that vocal plasticity was the "be all and end all" of these singers. Be that as it may, our concern is with the fact that the justly famous vocalists of the

[1] Had they done so they would have resorted to "vocalising," and thus would have initiated an untrue art. For if the "vocalising" of words be true then is the vocal art false. It is indeed unworthy of the notice of literary and of all thinking men.

world from 1700 to our day made their voices their servants, instead of permitting them to become their masters; and one may re-assert that it would be well to trust Nature in her instinct toward betterment, and to credit *bel-canto* vocalists with the desire for something more satisfying than mere prettiness and agility of voice. So much for what we may describe as an attempt at an *à priori* argument based upon natural growth in accordance with natural law. In the next chapter we shall find ourselves on still more secure ground.

CHAPTER III

WHAT IS SINGING? (CONTINUED)

Handel the authority on *bel-canto*.—Parisian and Bostonian authorities on the same thing.—Sims Reeves the Handelian exponent of *bel-canto* and the variant type of singer.—*Bel-canto* equivalent to mastery over voice; meaning that voice *serves* mind and words (the media of mental manifestation).—Composer must control singer, not *vice versa*.—Evil influence of worshipping fetich (*i.e.*, ear-flattering tone) upon oratorio performance and reading of Liturgy.—Sims Reeves, the oratorio singer.—Linguistic and atmospheric pronunciation *versus* "sensuous beauty of line and colour."

THERE is one man who is sufficiently authoritative to help us to a fairly reliable account of *bel-canto*, viz., Handel. The words of Robert Franz to Waldmann (quoted by Mr. Finck in "Songs and Song Writers") are definite: "*If any one understood the 'bel-canto' of the Italians, it was Handel.*" Here then is firm earth. Handel understood Italian *bel-canto*. A modest, docile study of the man and his work will reveal something of the principles of this school of singing. An author[1] who is overfond of Paris fashions quotes a singer who has made himself famous as a "colour" vocalist. This able actor-singer tells us that, "in the days of the schools of the *Arte del bel-canto*, the masters did not have to take 'truth of expression' (*l'expression juste*) into account; for the singer was not required to render the sentiments of the *dramatis personæ* with verisimilitude; all that was

[1] Apthorp's "Opera Past and Present," pp. 184–5.

demanded of him was harmonious [1] sounds, the *bel-canto.*" "In other words," this author goes on to say, "beauty of vocal tone and beauty of musical plastics were the only recognised elements of emotional expression in singing, beyond that general fervour of delivery (*sic*) which may best be described as an absence of apathy. The emotions themselves were not to be differentiated, and the psychical character of the *dramatis personæ* was not to be taken into account. All the singer had to do was to sing and nothing else."

If Handel had been privileged to read these strange pronouncements, one wonders what the result would have been—he could be fairly violent on occasion! The oratorio giant has suffered much from the assumptions of those who have claimed that all that is demanded of Handelian singers is "harmonious sounds and nothing else." Imagine if you can the genial, poetic, imaginative, graphic Handel who set to music most of the human emotions, from the reflective "Passion" to the thunderclap of the joyous "Hallelujah" in "The Messiah," and who certainly sounded some depths in emotional differentiation in "Samson"—imagine him being put off with "pretty" sounds! "No differentiation" necessary in such opposite rôles as those of Manoah and Harapha; in "Rejoice greatly" and "I know that my Redeemer liveth"! Could "harmonious tone and musical plastics" have enabled Jenny Lind (whose voice was not

[1] Briefly one might describe a "harmonious" voice as one which flatters the ear, but makes no direct appeal to the understanding.

of the finest character by nature) and Sims Reeves, to seize upon the inner meaning of these great Handelian works, and to present them as living entities? The vocalists who have added to mere popularity the power of impressing the thoughtful inner circle have ever been those whose voices reflected *thought*. Sims Reeves was in many respects an arch-type of the really great singer. And what was the key to his position? Certainly not "harmoniousness of voice and musical plastics," though his voice was both harmonious and plastic.

Well does the present writer remember the manner in which the great tenor discussed the mode of expression which he imagined—and rightly—that a leader of God's host would adopt when calling the people to arms. "He would not," said he, "use this kind of voice or tone" (imitating the harmonious, yet cramped, untrue, "white" tone of singers of another school). "He would sing ('Sound an alarm') thus," continued Mr. Reeves. And lo! by a change of mental and physical attitude, he made it clear that he pictured himself as a leader of God's host, the consequence being that his "Sound an alarm" had a good deal of differentiated emotion in it, not operatic nor bizarre, but noble and suited to the scene. Nor did he seem to trouble himself about "harmoniousness of tone and musical plastics," though both were present as the result of spiritual power and fine schooling. He wanted to say, as a man and a musician would say, "Sound an alarm," and he said it. This little scene is instructive, for if

Sims Reeves was anything, he was a Handelian singer, even as Handel was a master of *bel-canto;* and if Handel's music was anything, it was and is a study in the musical differentiation of emotions. Even Wagner, musician and eloquent actor though he was, never penned a more logical and truthful phrase than the one Handel uses as the musical equivalent to the words "Thy rebuke hath broken his heart." The mere fact that this part of his "Messiah" is narrative, does not weaken the argument; on the contrary, it strengthens it. For the subtle judgment necessary to convey the sympathy in the narrator without becoming unduly personal made the task the more difficult. It was an exercise of differentiated human emotion in the contemplation of divine suffering.

Nor may we suppose that Handel would have been satisfied with a less just expression in his operas than he must have demanded in his oratorios. True it is that he made use of the peculiar form of voice [1] which the times gave him, for certain parts; he wanted to attract the public to the operas for which he fought so long and so unsuccessfully. But this was a sop to *Cerberus*. Handel was a theatrical manager as well as a composer. The student may safely conclude then that *bel-canto* meant *mastery over the voice*. The singers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries prepared themselves by years of long study to give expression to the music allotted to them. The singers of the twentieth century have precisely the same task to negotiate. Up to the date of this writing

[1] The male soprano.

it may be said that we prepare ourselves for our tasks mainly by performing them! From the vocal point of view, this idea of mastery over voice (and there is, too, a clear gain in vocal power) represents the benefit the world reaped from music which lived long enough to accomplish this purpose, and then perished. The legacy it left to mankind was the group of principles for vocal culture with which we are familiar enough. But this mastery over voice was designed to be a means and not an end. Nature had a task for her sons in the coming years. No achievement is ever lost; it is, on the contrary, a vantage ground for greater triumph.

In the days of *bel-canto* covered by Bach, Handel, Haydn, and Mozart, vocalists were asked to sing such music as was considered vocal; the task was a lighter one than mankind had to face later on. But the task served to secure the "mastery" over the voice we have already mentioned. Fortunately the tendency of composers is to make vocal music more and more truly histrionic—so that it shall correspond more and more with the inflexions of language; and the burden laid upon the *vocalists of the future* is so to carry out the directions of *bel-canto*, that *nothing written by the composer* (provided it be in any sense true to the thought which is in the words) *shall be considered impossible* by the singer. In all human work there will be limitations, but all musical intervals of any kind whatsoever which are rational and colloquially possible to the cultured man, and are therefore admissible, and which are on that account

musically legitimate, shall be considered to be within the range of vocal possibility. On the other hand, refer composers to vocalists as to what they may consider vocal, and you fetter the composer's genius.

This then is the new country which was opened up by the branch line of *bel-canto*. *Whatever a musician can write a singer can—nay, he must—sing.* The tyranny of the "harmonious-sound" has, by musician and singer, been too long allowed to interfere with mental growth and freedom of treatment. He who would be master of his voice must therefore add quick, versatile perception, and verbal elasticity, to vocal agility, sonority, and charm. Further, this tyranny has been felt in another direction, and has put back the clock. If our leaders of musical and vocal thought had been less inclined to fetich worship the state of oratorio work would not be so deplorable [1] in London and New York to-day. Public interest in it is largely dormant, and is active only where fine chorus-singing is the mainspring of interest. The reason for this moribund state of oratorio (in addition to the undue preference given by that frivolous class called "Society" to opera), is the fact that an ecclesiastically dull and professionally "harmonious" atmosphere has spread itself over most of our performances. Oratorio is become *oratorioish* and conventional. Even Church musicians have rebelled against Handel.

Now, Church singing may be excellent—in church, but it does not suit the stage. Very reverently be it said, yet very emphatically, that the treatment of the

[1] "Deplorable" in regard to public support.

Church Liturgy, even by dignitaries, is by no means a model of supreme effectiveness. But this is not all. Clerical perfunctoriness has invaded the stage, and its influence on the performance of oratorio has been the reverse of beneficial. A cultured and serious Artist may safely be trusted to preserve his sense of reverence when dealing with sacred and inspired themes. Dulness is not reverence, and all music "sacred and profane" demands verisimilitude. Take for example once more the manner in which Sims Reeves dealt with oratorio—he pictured it all. It was the personal, emotional, and subjective note, the result of vivid imagination and of true unity with his theme, that made him unique and memorable. Vocal technique, together with true harmoniousness, he possessed in abundance, nor was he ever at a loss for power to differentiate emotions as occasion required. It appears incredible that any one, with this great singer's example before him, should pretend to believe that mere harmoniousness could have satisfied Handel,[1] or that it could deal effectively with his works. Certainly, no one can deny that this noncommittal method of oratorio singing and the approval bestowed upon it have paralysed individual efforts for a lengthy period. The power of prejudice against verisimilitude in sacred music and the conventional predilection toward mere "harmoniousness" have held the field; in spite of the fact that human dramatic instinct has periodically revolted against their oppression. Yet the rebellion has not

[1] Sims Reeves was a *bel-cantist*—even as Handel was.

become general; it may be that many fear for their future as singers and will continue to do so until the day dawns when faith casts out fear.

A sense of unreality, remoteness, and pretence has been given to oratorio by pedagogic insistence (of non-performers and theorists) upon the statement that oratorio is not dramatic. Vocal progress has been checked in England by this contention, and oratorio solo singing has been to a great extent emasculated. The singer's art has suffered largely, even though we have had in our midst an authority like Signor Randegger, stoutly advocating the very opposite view for over half a century.

Another contention which has narrowed the singer's and composer's outlook, thereby diminishing their power, awaits our notice at this point: "It happens that the idealising power of this mysterious Art of Tones resides in its sensuous beauty of line and colour."[1] Now, musical beauty and ideality do not reside *primarily* in "sensuous beauty of line and colour," else were a Sousa "March" on the same level as a Beethoven Symphony, and all conductors and vocalists equally efficient. The fact that Pasquale Brignoli "coolly drew tears from the eyes of his audience and produced frantic excitement" proves nothing, except that his art was of the tearful and frantic sort. *Tears and frenzy are not the end of all*

[1] Apthorp's "Opera Past and Present." This author's statement is either open to our objections or it is a platitude. In one sense "idealising power" does "reside" in "sensuous beauty of line and colour," so also does mind in grey matter, soul in body.

things in Art. The "idealising power" of the vocalist's art (a branch of the "Art of Tones") "resides" in something above its means of expression, its tools, so to speak. Many a "colour" vocalist has lived to rue the day when he gave himself up to this kind of materialism (for it *is* that and nothing else); and has had ample time to cool his heels in the morass of false intonation and premature vocal decay into which he has been drawn. Musical beauty and ideality of voice reside *not* primarily "in the sensuous beauty of line and colour," but in the power of developing an absolutely just correlation between the voice and the quick vision of the spiritual man. When that correlation is established, the voice proclaims what the soul sees; and intrinsic, ideal beauty is the result.

If this be not so, then were all composers wrong, from Peri to Wagner; and if they, the composers, were, and are wrong, there is but little hope that the vocal art ever could have been or ever can be right. The style and form of vocalists' utterance depend upon this "sentimental" thought of ours—that the source of the river is not the river-bed. Line and colour will always be present in the vocal artist's work, as a result of fine technique; but there will be more than the merely sensuous in that work,—there will be a precipitate of psychic, architectonic, created *thought.* This "mysterious Art of Tones" exists for that, and depends on that kind of "beauty" for its life. Sims Reeves's picture of "Sound an alarm" was as *musically* true as Job's picture of the war horse, "which scenteth the battle from afar," was and is *poetically*

true. Reeves saw the scene mentally, and painted it with his voice, even as the author of "The book of Job" saw his ideal war horse, and painted it in words. The effect of these words, one fancies, would be somewhat marred if their terseness were changed into *the steed, which is nasally conscious of the aroma of polemical engagements from a distance—"a sure diagnostic symptom" of military, hippic or equine, quadrupedal sensibility.*

A mere *flow* of language would not have given effect to "Job's" effort any more than a succession of sustained notes, however "harmonious" in character, would have produced Sims Reeves's musical picture of "Sound an alarm" or "The enemy said, I will pursue."

Subtle as this truth may be, singers must reckon with it, and must realise that the addition to or the subtraction of one word from Job's description would have ruined the verbal picture. So also, the addition of any false vocal quality (however "harmonious"), or the subtraction of any quality necessary for the presentation, would have ruined Sims Reeves's picture of a warrior crying, "Sound an alarm." The direction of line and colour depends on something outside of these, and that something, that principle, may be said to lie at the very root of the great creations of the world's composers from Bach to the present day. The musical power of inspired musicians depends upon their ability to reveal themselves—to project their originality through their music; and to stand out, accordingly, as Bach, Beethoven, and so on, and

not as any other. All true composers feel that the music grows out of the situation and the words, and to them there is no other setting possible—at the time—than the one they transfer to their music paper. It is true, of course, that every effective vocal effort must be a *sustained* effort, which gives the *line;* and that the tone must be *correlative* to the word, which gives *colour* and *true harmony. The singer's case is practically on all fours with that of the composer; the only difference being that the medium—voice—is not the same.*[1]

[1]Cf. Chap. V., on Oratorio, pp. 192–196.

CHAPTER IV

WHAT IS SINGING? (Continued)

A Bostonian writer on musical subjects.—The "metaphysical" as opposed to the "scientific" school of musical thought.—Genius and technique.—Great singers strive to follow great composers.—With the former, the thought and sung-word correspond; with the latter, thought and written-interval.—Real singing reveals character dealing with up-building thought.—Natural art is universal art.—Contemporary æstheticism, descended from a modern cult (itself descended from pagan *via* gnostic pantheism), is unnatural.—Co-ordinate expression (physical, intellectual, moral, spiritual) the true singer's aim.—Vision-seers; simulation; dissimulation; identification (practical).—M. Coquelin.—Man-destroying cults.—*Anima libera in corpore libero.*—Natural art comprehends all that great composers have treated musically: man, life, death, continuous life, God.

There remains yet another contention to dispose of, which has checked the growth of healthy, spiritual art, productive and reproductive—the art of composer and vocalist respectively. This contention appears with the others we have already discussed; and their author,[1] typical of a class, supplies the student with much matter for discussion, to the edification of those brother-students who need a definition of singing based on organic principles.

The author in question merely voices the opinions of a school of thought which delights in calling itself the "scientific" as opposed to the "metaphysical" school. He finds himself unable to agree with

[1] Apthorp's "Opera Past and Present," p. 17.

e.g. Schubert. In his anxiety to prove that the "doing and the ability to do" are of greater moment than the thing which is done (if he mean not that, he means nothing—his periods become mere platitudes) this author discovers that a river does not rise at its source. Says he: "Let no one rant about the glory of pure genius and music speaking to the heart: the truth that cannot be got rid of is, that a general deterioration in technical ability, in the ability to do, in any nation, is a sure diagnostic symptom of artistic decay."

The great point then, is technique!

When a nation has something to say, or do, it says or does it; when it does nothing and has not the "ability to do" it is because it feels it has nothing in particular to do. Nor is a nation likely to be very busy if it feed on ideas which confound spirituality with sentimentality. Writing which proceeds on these lines may be "smart," but it does not nourish life; food of this kind makes no bone. We must not "rant" forsooth, "about the glory of pure genius," for the means whereby genius expresses itself is the main thing! Composers and vocalists may rave about divine inspiration: this *coterie* of very superior persons is not to be influenced by any such eccentricity!

What does Schubert say to all this? "A lovely melody has just come into my head; if I only had some music paper!" These were his words, after perusing a poem he saw lying on a table in an inn. A ruled bill-of-fare was handed to him and the result

was "Hark, hark, the Lark"! On another occasion (after he had read the poem) he said to a lady who had asked him to set it to music: "I have it, it is already completed and will be quite good." On his deathbed, he said to Bauernfeld: "Entirely new harmonies and rhythms are in my head." If this be not genius, and the ground work of Schubert's "ability to do," it is strange that we have no more Schuberts; for every Kapellmeister "knows how" to write music, but the music is generally "Kapellmeisterish," for all that. Franz Abt's idea of the "Ride of the Walkyries" did not coincide with Wagner's, and yet he was quite a prolific writer. Schubert decided, a few weeks before his death, to study counterpoint with Sechter. His friends advised it (candid friends!) and he agreed. According to the incredulous class which we are discussing (after all, it is the difference between *credimus* and *ignoramus* which causes all the dissension), Schubert was a "ranter," when he spoke of "new harmonies and rhythms in his head," for, according to them, he wrote "Lieder" because he "knew how," and not because he had them in his heart and soul to write. And yet we are told that his "how" was defective, for he was to go, a few weeks before he died, to take lessons in counterpoint! Nay, "technique" is *not* the main thing, though it is an integral part of it. It will do us no harm to "rant" a little over "genius," *if and when we find it.* To take a simple simile: everyone will concede that though thought must have preceded language, still, language helps and enriches thought.

So music evolved technique, though it be true that technique has helped to spread and develop music. *But the music must be there to begin with;* if this be not so, we shall have to reconstruct our ideas of scientific, and of all knowledge, from their very foundations. Science, by the way, none too soon, is wisely modest; the world of physics, *e.g.*, is still a little uncertain of itself since the discovery of Radium put another complexion on the doctrine of the "conservation of energy."

Inspiration can do something without elaborate technique, but technique can do nothing without inspiration, except perhaps write nerveless, insipid nonsense. Mozart produced and wrote things down without much interference from the grammarian. A man must perforce learn the language, before he can talk—eloquently or otherwise; but knowledge of language will not make a Tennyson, any more than that of musical "language" will make a Mozart, or a smattering of both a critic. Technical schools abound in Paris, yet, apparently, Parisian pictorial art generally has not much to say. General technical activity accompanies general spiritual and creative ability; and technique will give adequate expression, in the main, to the thoughts of genius, *while genius will always discover its own technique.* The singer's case is parallel to that of composer and painter. The "personal charm," possibly another name for genius in the rough, "counts for a great deal"—as M. Coquelin, the prince of technicians, admits—almost in spite of himself.

The bigotry of those who cling to that which is demonstrable to and by the senses is presumably too great to allow them to realise that we do not grow Mozarts and Beethovens in our day, to any great extent at least, although Conservatoires abound.[1] "Ability to do" is general, singing and music are universally taught; and yet geniuses do not arrive in crowds. We are assured by some, that the musical decadence of Italy was caused by the exclusion of foreign compositions from its shores, so that Italians failed to secure the progress which comes from "free-trade" in music. This may be true enough in the case of countries where the original fount of music is a shallow one. But if technical ability, and brisk free-trade in art-products are prime causes in the production of geniuses, we might expect "Turners" to abound had we plenty of persons to teach us colour-mixing, and exhibitions to exploit the pictures. Men forget how to pronounce nobly when they have nothing noble to pronounce, and they can never have much of a gospel if club and concert-room be taken as their chief sources of inspiration. The Eternal may not be scientifically demonstrable; but leave it out of Art, especially out of musical and vocal Art, and you fail to reckon with an integral part of the organic whole. The symphonic form has been with us since Beethoven, and some few know all about its construction; some, knowing "how" have even written symphonies; but Beethoven remains a lone god upon the mountain height. True, he knew

[1] There may be more geniuses among us than we imagine.

"how to do," but he also knew he had *something* "to do."

Spiritual activities are not to be discouraged if Art is to grow in power. To tell us that we "rant," if we talk of genius; and to focus our attention on technique as our *summum bonum* is to fetter us. Technique and science are indispensable, but a noble creative power *compels* a noble technique, and uses it to express original and unconventional thought. This technical science is shown in musical and poetic vitality, wide as the universe, and dependent upon Eternal Spirit. All those whose vocal work was worthy of association with great compositions practically *took a leaf out of the composers' book*, and reared their vocal art-fabric upon the same foundation as musical-creators used for theirs. It matters not how the artist may comport himself, he can at the last do no more than present the original composition to his audience. To put it simply, *the vocalist does his work worthily when he makes the thought and the sung-word correspond; just as the composer* [1] *may be said to rise to the situation, when he makes the thought in the word and the musical interval and phrase agree with each other.* Very simple and natural, all this, and very destructive of "Abracadabra," and "Hocus-pocus." Very effective, too; for the supreme powers of the vocal stage have been, not plastic gymnasts or enervating "colourists," but men and women who have conveyed through their tone-quality a true and sincere representation of the poet's thought, wedded

[1] N.B.—The composer of vocal music.

to the musician's idea of that thought. Line and colour are inseparable from an artist's presentation of the eternal thought or concept (the amalgam of words and music), but they are not the primary force. A poet "sees down into the heart of things," a true musician hears—"down into the heart of things." Both poet and musician see and hear with their own eyes and ears, and they reproduce that which they see and hear.[1] The vocalist having disciplined his mind to grasp, and his voice to utter, poetic-minded thought, listens for the original song, hears it, and says—in effect—"This is how it sounds to me."

Many internal and external causes have dwarfed our vocal art, but no greater mischief-maker ever existed than the suggestion that *bel-cantists* were, originally, musical mountebanks, and that modern vocalists are to be nothing but emotional gymnasts! Created musical thought exists, and is the united resultant of music and poetry, being just as surely a structure, for all its invisibility, as that of the architect. The result of Sims Reeves's singing was such that one could, were one a painter, translate it into a painter's language. It possessed a quality which could be reproduced. The end of all emotional exercise is co-ordinate thought, which is capable of bringing other thought—not necessarily of the same order—into existence; and this thought is manifested in all art-

[1] The composer does not *hear* a whole symphony to start with, but he hears the idea; the architect does not *see* the whole fabric in detail of a cathedral; he sees the idea.

products, musical, pictorial or plastic. The real operatic composer is the man who sets *character in the making* on the stage; *the real singer is the man who reveals character in the act of dealing with thought.* To hold the opposite view is to confess oneself the half-grown puppet of a stunted æstheticism. The creative artist passes through emotion to contemplation or sympathetic observation; he leaves mental agitation behind, and presses forward to the constructive activity that lies beyond. In the words of Browning ("Pippa Passes") :

> "Shall to produce form out of unshaped stuff
> Be Art, and further, to evoke a soul
> From form be nothing?"

Character engaged upon characterisation is ever more fruitful than emotionalism engaged upon emotion. The stunted æsthete may shriek "sentimentality" at those who refuse line and colour as the sole essentials of Art, but the full-grown, able-bodied, able-souled artist has no ears for him. Æstheticism lends itself to posing, and the poseur-eye sees nothing but posing all around. If we are ever to have "natural" Art, we cannot afford to leave out of our reckoning any principle which is characteristic of Universal Nature. Every mental and psychic quality known to and recognised by sane men, must be in "natural" Art. Construction is as characteristic of men as it is of beavers, which take all they want to construct their dams. The contemplative [1] and the

[1] Contemplation succeeds in the artist's mind to emotionalism, and out of it comes abstract thought.

constructive are the goal of the vocal artist. Differentiation of emotions is only a means to an end, that end being mood-delineation and characterisation. These in turn enable the artist to arrive at objective portrayal of character (throughout a series of moods and scenes), which portrayal finally assumes proportions of equal magnitude and importance with the composer's work. *In one word, emotional activity is the blending of the colours, while singing is the picture painted and finished.* At bottom all this amounts to a plea for unity of design.

Comprehensive Art fosters charity; not so the art of a cult, which has always branded itself by killing prophets and stoning ambassadors. Too frequently there is found a sometimes fawning, sometimes snarling "æstheticism," substituted for a sturdy, independent spirituality! If the history of Art and Religion teach anything it is that "æstheticism," pure and simple, leads to *gehenna and gaol, not to heaven and liberty.*[1] A purely æsthetic cult lands men into frank degenerate paganism; not the paganism of about 540 to 430 B.C., but that of a later date. A life of pure sunshine and pleasure might perhaps have its art-needs met by the æsthete's "line and colour." But life is in itself an art-picture in the highest sense, here gloomy, there joyous; and it is the contrast of these elements, and the strength born of their clashings (evidence of mental and psychic growth) which

[1] Curiously enough "æstheticism" is on occasion stable companion to *sordidness*. This pair races to *destruction*, jockeyed by those who would force artists to convert *Art* into *business*.

give it value. *"Æstheticism" never yet taught anyone what to do with disenchantment and with agony; but Art has so taught men.*

Our Art, to be universal, must take all vital elements into account; it must climb every height and sound every depth of human life. The senses and human understanding would lead us part of the way; the heart and æsthetic intellect help us to some extent; but if we would reproduce the conditions which resulted in the Tragedies of Æschylus and Sophocles, in the marbles of Phidias and Praxiteles, in Apelles's paintings, and in the works of Shakespeare, Dante and Goethe, of Bach and Beethoven, we must call to our aid the imaginative reason, which alone can lighten the darkness of dull, crass humanity.

Instinct, guided by intellect and natural imagination, and helped by a well-stored brain, constitutes a force which enables man to "plunge to the centre of an instant." By its aid he seizes all pertinent points, disregards non-essentials, sees at a glance all there is in life, all that has been in it from age to age, from the beginning until now; and brings it to bear upon his art fabric, pictorial, musical, plastic,—it matters not what the medium of expression may be.

The pendulum swings to and fro, ideals vary, religions rise and wane, cults and sects flourish and decay; but one unfailing and ever-waxing faculty in man—the power of adapting himself to expanding environment—enables him to see, with the mind's eye, all that is unfolded for him in the universe, so that he may make use of it in successive creations.

In other words, man is empowered, if he blind not himself, to learn the truth of what universal nature tells. He communicates it to his brethren under the encouraging influence of the powers which have slowly developed in the human race, powers of sense, understanding, and imaginative reason. The creative vocal artist will see, hear, feel, imagine, all there is to be seen, heard, felt, imagined; and he will by force of reason weld the whole into a drama of the invisible—to speak more exactly—into a vocal phenomenon which is inaudible, until he calls it forth by weaving its component parts together. The scale of creation rises from monad to man. Between these two limits are endless forms of life, which are useful in proportion to their correspondence to environment. The highest visible life-form is man, to whom nothing would seem to be impossible. He can, by the aid of his imaginative reason, cope with all things that are, discover the secrets of heaven and of hell, and marshal legions of facts together, till he make of them one army, with which he may subdue unknown lands where dark thoughts do darkly dwell. The narrow limits which æsthetes set upon the power of the eye of the spirit are vicious; if to insist upon this seem "sentimental" we must bear the reproach. We are "sentimental," but we live in the company of those who dream dreams, and see visions, and who incorporate dreams and visions in their art-product for man's benefit. Perhaps, after all, it were better to be "sentimental" and organic, than brutish and

[1] Cf. Chap. V. and Chap. VI. re "natural."

abortive. The wider the outlook, the richer the Art. *To express co-ordinately the spiritual, moral, intellectual and physical attributes of man is the serious student's aim.*

Now these vision-seers, Beethoven, Schubert, and the rest, appear always as interested expounders of what they beheld in dreamland; their reproducers—performers—who re-expound the dream, always live as interested spectators of the scene, and will, in all characterisation, be the character portrayed—for the time. Such is the record of all great soloists. Nevertheless the protest of men like M. Coquelin against undue subjugation of the performer's personality by the rôle he undertakes is pertinent and valuable. This great actor has seen, in his own land especially, so much of the complete overmastering of "self" by the "counterfeit," so much tearing of passion to tatters, that he appears to have gone to the opposite extreme. According to M. Coquelin, simulation supersedes practical identification in the artist's performance. This teaching may be eminently satisfactory in "Cyrano" and kindred rôles, but in all cases where primordial life is depicted, mere simulation would give a sense of insincere dissimulation; while absolute identification with the object of artistic treatment would always result in verisimilitude.[1]

All who have carved their names on the heart of humanity and who have carried the scholar as well as the man in the street with them, have *lived* their

[1] All interested in this subject may be strongly recommended to read Diderot's "Paradoxe du Comedien."

parts. The scholar tells you *why* he likes a performance (unless he joins a cult, and then his pedagogic scholasticism, with its attendant dangers, viz., pride and self-consciousness, *destroy the man in him*), while the general public says merely, "I like it." Both classes are useful.

Those who have *lived* their parts, have done so by using the whole man, the imaginative reason, the understanding, the senses, to dominate the situation.[1] They have given free play to their capacity for dreaming, for virtual identification with all sorts and conditions of men and characters. They have cultivated moods of abstraction into the conditions of spiritual beings; they have, be it said with deep reverence, felt a certain identification with the Spirit of the Great First Cause. All such concentration results in lofty, imaginative sympathy with great characters, which are manifestations of the might of Eternal Character. Such artists as have been described above become free and unhampered, and they enjoy unconscious freedom of spirit. Their body is also free—*anima libera in corpore libero*. The spirit, being free to go where it will, must realise powerfully all it sees. The reason will govern the degree of dominion exercised over it by the scene depicted or by the character personified. To this end are our schools multiplied. M. Coquelin, during his visit to America in April, 1901, emphasised the necessity of adding to their number. "Freedom and faculty of expression," said he, "will be given to students in schools, and these they must

[1] Cf. Chap. XIV. (Style), p. 179.

have, in order to become artists. The greater freedom an artist acquires, the more effectively will his individual qualities reveal themselves. In acting, as in painting, the personal element is of very great importance and charm." *Mutatis mutandis*, these words may be applied to the singer's case.

The close reader has observed that our search for an answer to the question "What is singing?" has brought us into touch with various views of technical and spiritual activities. Slowly the belief has grown that *the singer's Art must embrace the whole of man's nature, and that, if this art is to be justly called natural, it must deal with all subject matter known to the mind and soul as well as to the intellect and senses of man.* This has been and is the basis of the writer's vocal work, and to this he brings testimony, for the sake of those who come after.

CHAPTER V

WHAT IS SINGING? (CONTINUED)

Recapitulation of first four chapters.—Nature comprehensive and purposeful.—Huxley and John Fiske on the word "natural."—Nature explains herself through "selection" and "progress."—The Artist a unit in the scheme, a means as well as an end.—Cultivation of means, clearness of aim, unity of design.—*Bel-canto* again.—Unnatural art.—Paganism and Pantheism in art.—Details of student's struggle for realisation of his ideals.—Relaxation.—Conservation of energy.—Breathing and soft use of voice, which is an instrument for characterisation.—Independence in art.—Caution.—Lyric and dramatic singing.—Voice-quality dependent on mind and its activity.—Dramatic *timbre* not flesh but spirit.—Independence justified.—Tone-worship is fetich-worship.—Instrumentalists an example to vocalists.—Mind plus *muscle* superior to muscle *minus* mind.—Effort in singing.—Constitutional singing and breathing.—Co-ordination of powers.

A RAPID survey of the ground gained by the skirmishing in our first four chapters would now seem to be desirable, so that we may not only extend our operations, but also demonstrate the fact that we are in touch with our base.

At the beginning of the first chapter we put a question—"What is Singing?" as do all students, consciously or unconsciously. Every singer is practically a definition-seeker. Our question is not easily answered, it calls for serious thought. As we look around us for aid, our glance falls upon the composer who, as such, strangely enough, seems quite a likely

person to help us to an answer—and consequently to a definition. We therefore approach the composer rather than the historical voice-producer, because the latter has *always* been a little awe-inspiring. It takes a rebel to say it, but nevertheless it must be said, that voice-production never was the outcome of any *special* revelation. It should, therefore, never have challenged the musical and literary intelligence of good composers; this it did when it first said to them, in effect, "It is impossible for *you* to know how *tone* is made; *tone* is secured in a very peculiar way, and this peculiarity is a *mystery*. The voice-producer is the high-priest of this mystery. You, being only composers, and not voice-producers, are not qualified to speak authoritatively on the subject." To this, the present writer—being also a voice-trainer, and feeling sure his modern colleagues will agree with him—ventures to reply, that the good composer, as such, is of all people the best qualified to teach *tone* or voice-production; further, that the tone which does not satisfy the composer's brain is wrong. Nor is there anything very alarming in this thought to those of us who are voice-producers, for good composers are ever enthusiastic and generous, ever ready to help the voice-producer in his arduous task. General enlightenment cannot fail to reveal the fact that voice and song are far more abundant than is usually supposed. *The singer is no hypnotist, nor is sensuous emotion the end of art.* Such knowledge as the writer possesses of singing (ancient and modern) coupled with his own experience as a

singer, will help to answer the question he has been rash enough to raise, viz., "What is singing?"

"Singing is sustained musicalised speech," seems to be, in one sense, an excellent answer; in another, indefinite and unsatisfactory. Modern ballad-singers give us *diastematic*—"sustained, musicalised," speech, but this does not suffice. The singer of the future will demand more; he will want to be versatile and to sing *everything* which is *singable*, and to sing it as it should be sung. Modern ballad-singing is often mis-called "natural;" it is common in our country, but it is not "natural," and it belongs to the *particular*, not to the *universal*.

Now, the word "Nature" suggests more to-day than it did when, as yet, Darwin, Huxley, Spencer, and John Fiske had not enriched us with their thoughts concerning its import. The combined researches of these men have demonstrated that *Nature* is a wide and a comprehensive term. Surely, the artist will not seek to minimise the results of the scientific man's work, nor to make narrow that which he has shown to be broad. The singing-artist is a poet, and the poet is ever transcendental; the singing-artist is also a musician and an unselfish labourer for the general good. The musician (as Sir Edward Elgar, in his stirring and eloquent preface to this volume, quotes from Socrates) is one who has "seen the most of truth." Our singing-artist will therefore not shut his eyes to the truth which the scientific man has, with infinite pains, uncovered for him.

The scientific man, the poet, the musician, the

singer:—a goodly company to appeal to for a definition of "natural" singing!

In order that we may have a clear idea of Nature and "natural" characteristics, let us quote from the works of two of the scientific writers mentioned above. Huxley [1] says that "Social life and the ethical process in virtue of which it advances to perfection, are part and parcel of the general process of evolution." John Fiske [2] says that "The general process of evolution is the cosmic process. It is Nature's way of doing things."

We may therefore claim that "social life" and "the ethical," and "the cosmic process," constitute the process of evolution,[3] which is the highway along which Nature travels, lavishing wondrous gifts on every hand as her triumphal car rolls majestically toward its destination. Accordingly, when NATURE is named, the idea of growth and improvement in the Universal, generally; and in the Vegetable, Animal, and Human kingdoms, particularly, is presented to us at a glance.

It would appear, then, that Nature is no mean guide, and that Topsy was quite artistic and academic in her phraseology when she made her famous declaration. Our "nature," however, must be the Nature of History; the artist (we are treating the case of the *singing*-artist) must not omit any universal characteristic of such "history," nor should he include in

[1] Part of a footnote to his address delivered at Oxford in 1893.
[2] "Through Nature to God," p. 77. (Houghton, Mifflin and Co.)
[3] See Chap. I., Part I., pp. 8–11.

his art anything which runs counter to comprehensive Nature's aim, nor exclude anything that is inherent in a complete ideal of Life, which is, indeed, complex as to detail, but simple as to aim. The singing-artist's idea of Nature must be full and comprehensive, and his art, if it is to be "natural" [1] must conform to that idea. He must realise Nature's "method" as seen in the history of Universal development, perceive that it is continuous, and that it has an aim, viz., PROGRESS. "Art" which leads *nowhere* cannot be compared with art which leads *somewhere*, in particular; song which limit's life's ideals is despicable, when judged by song which expands them.

Nature has proved clearly that she has laboured incessantly in one continuous spell until Humanity was produced, which *found* Itself when it began to place mind above matter. The artist does well, accordingly, to follow in Nature's footsteps, and to rest content with what she has done for the physical man. If the aim of modern song be sublimated sensuous expression and emotion, such aim is worthless and can produce no result—as far as art is concerned. Play is legitimate, even praiseworthy, but it is not work; entertainment is desirable, but it is not art; it is, moreover, insidiously aggressive, and apt to become tyrannical and to kill all reverence for, and effort in the pursuit of, ART. Besides, our feathered friends, the birds, can safely be left to the task of dealing with sheerly beautiful sounds. Man need not be jealous of birds—he is

[1] See Chap. I., Part I., pp. 8, 9.

wanted for a purpose somewhat different from theirs.

When the singer of the future sees that *Nature*, of which he is the highest product, spent untold millions of years in producing *man*, who at last began to prepare for becoming "a living soul" when he preferred mind before matter, he—the future singer—will gird himself with strength, so that he too may continuously strive and prove himself to be one who sets mind above matter, and that he is "a living soul" when at his ART-WORK. The mind without the soul is powerless in creative art-work; the singer will therefore connect his efforts with the aim of all human endeavour—with the realisation of the divine, which is the beautiful.

We have been a little exacting upon the reader's attention in regard to the meaning of the word Nature, but necessarily so, because our search for a definition of singing, such as will begin to satisfy us, depends entirely upon our views in reference to "the natural." One crude formula has already been dismissed, and the form of singing (wrongly styled "natural") which we call "ballady" can no longer be accepted as a form of Art, because it fails in important works. Our elimination of "ballady" singing from Art-work was done in deference to Nature; she proceeds by means of Natural Selection and Evolution of the highest good—thus discovering her secret as to what is "natural" and what is not. We shall be safe then if we try to discover "natural" art by the use of "natural"—"*methods*," and our ideal will necessarily be

a strong one, if we follow so powerful and liberal a counsellor. Nature, as a whole, is symbolic, and her counsel is the only one which a natural artist may follow. She has made it clear that her signification is the preservation of the whole race, so that it becomes inevitable that the artist must take "*The greatest good of the greatest number*" as his motto. This will ensure his own "greatest good"—incidentally. He is one among numberless responsible units, and is a means as well as an end. But means must be made adequate for ends, and be consciously used in relation to them; this cannot be done if there arise any confusion as to aim, limiting the range and effectiveness of the means, and destroying unity—an ideal and permanent characteristic of all true art. We have accordingly dismissed, as being false, the glorifying of one emotion at the expense of another. The records of *bel-canto* enabled us to exercise the analytic faculty, and we had sufficient historical ground to assure us that *bel-cantists* worked on lines of rational consistency, patience, and perseverance. We thus learned what singing *ought* and what it ought *not* to be. The original *bel-cantists'* ideas of song became clear to us, because we know that they were thoughtful musicians; and, in every age, thoughtful principle has gone further and lasted longer than sensuously emotional effectiveness. It is therefore more desirable.

Again, knowing that certain principles produce *undesirable*, we supplanted them by opposite ones so as to produce *desirable* results. Next, we found in

Sims Reeves an example of a "natural" singer who commended himself to the whole British nation as one who was great as to voice, and equally able in all kinds of music. The small and self-centred are unnatural, nor can any art which ignores a universal characteristic claim to be styled "natural."

A river flows from its source and seeks its home—the sea. Healthy art does the same thing. It flows from *the objective* and it seeks the ocean of Universal Art, over which, in mystery profound, Divine Spirit ever broods. Paganism and Gnostic Pantheism, rich though they were (and are) in Æstheticism, destroy an all-important ideal, viz., that of unity and continuous productiveness — an ideal inherent in all healthy art. The reasonable, the probable, the common-sensible, will form the basis of our method throughout the present inquiry.

The man who *will* not (because the appeal of the sensuously "beautiful" or "emotional" is too strong) see the star of eternal progress shining above the artist's head, differs from him whose intellect has outgrown his faith. The former sells his birthright, the latter has not arrived at the point where he can claim it—can realise and use his *entire* force on behalf of himself and of his fellow-man.[1] We are not at present concerned with the relative strength of men who can, and those who cannot "be-

[1] To those who lived with and came after him, Thomas Henry Huxley and his divine work were inexplicable, except in the light of some such view as his friend John Fiske took of man—his "beginning" and his "end."

lieve." But in the case of the artist, the singing-artist especially (who must deal fully with music treating of God's relation to man, and its converse), it would seem to be a matter of common-sense that he should accept some such view of Evolution as is presented in this chapter. Nor could it fail to strike any ordinary mind as strange, that so wondrous a thing as a musician's power should exist for a few years and then wither like the grasses of the field, which die in myriads to make room for others. The poetic enthusiasm and musical truth which come with ideas such as those of "the morning-stars singing together and the Sons of God shouting for joy" at the creation of the world (our dear literal friend does not affright us), must be entirely lacking in the case of one who has no sort of belief in any of these things.

A purely scientific or a mathematical brain would not make much of the singer's art. Hence we urge that common-sense demands of the singer, not only that he should "believe," but also that he should prove his "belief" in and by his art. Even the few thoughts given him in this volume concerning the wonderful continuity of Evolution should help him to some extent in preparing his mind for further efforts.

Having thus recapitulated, we may proceed to deal with the details of the struggle which takes place while a singer is a-making; and at the same time offer some practical comments and deductions. Mental must presently give way to bodily considerations, but not quite yet.

Anyone wishing to become a practical demonstration of "What is singing?"—a handy definition, so to speak—will depend on two principles to help him at the start; and indeed ever after.

Firstly, he must breathe deeply, and secondly he must be able to sing softly.[1] When we speak of breathing, we include both inspiration and expiration. An inseparable condition of soft singing is the absolutely unrigid activity of the muscles of the upper part of the body, from the diaphragm upward. By this it is meant, that the student is not uncomfortably conscious of the upper part of his body, is not hampered in his articulation. In other words relaxation is present, and the "idée fixe" of the fixed chest is absent.

These three ideas form the basis of a singer's technique. Let us repeat them:—

a. Breath, deeply taken and deeply controlled.

b. Soft vocalising (by which is meant soft flow of voice).

c. Relaxation[2] (so that there is no *stiffness* in the muscles of the chest).

Strictly, (*c*) is preparatory to (*a*) and (*b*).

The student, we will assume, desires such a voice as will enable him to express himself in manly, musical fashion. The case is practically the same,

[1] Not that the singer, by means of volition, *makes* a soft tone. If he breathe and sing rightly, the tone *will be soft;* it cannot be loud at first.

[2] Not flaccidity. Relaxation is the result of consciousness of conserved energy.

whether we have male or female students under consideration. Having learnt something of locomotion, by means of infantile tottering from chair to chair, *i.e.*, having spent some time in making soft low tones, he starts in search of his voice, keeping the three ideas mentioned above constantly before him. He will encounter some trouble in securing such a control of his resources as will enable him to produce a voice of adequate resonance, one capable of serving him as an instrument. Now in one sense (the very highest) the voice is an instrument—the finest of all, in that it is indissolubly connected with speech.

A very vital danger confronts the student at the start, viz., the danger of securing resonance rapidly at all costs. This resonance is often procured by an unnatural and distorted raising of the palates, and a forcible downward pressure of the root of the tongue. All such fictitious and forced methods of securing ready-made vocal vesture cannot be too strongly condemned. *The texture of the voice must be slowly woven in the loom of time.* It is wise to look upon the voice as an instrument, wiser to spend years in perfecting it technically, wisest to add to this the discipline of soul and intellect, so that the song which flows through that instrument shall possess all the qualities which go to make a great personality. The pursuit of technique, or mastery over the voice, will prove to be an intellectual and a spiritual discipline, provided it be approached in the proper spirit.

The student, we will further assume, is dissatisfied with mere prettiness of voice, feeling that it must mean what he wants it to mean, or nothing. It must say, and say artistically, what he wishes it to say. The quiet lyric of a bashful violet or of a sunset glow in June, may not entirely satisfy the child of mountains and sharp crags hewn and carved by many a storm. He has, let us say, roamed the hills alone when a boy, peopling the plateaux with the armed forces of his fancy; has heard the shock of conflict and the voice of some great chieftain,—seen the rush of clans rallying to his call. Then the night has slowly unfolded its sable wing to cover up the dreadful scene, bringing with the deepening shadows that sense of the Infinite which folds you, as you sit on some hillside rock to rest, away in the heart of the hills. There out of the world, with no soul near, you are surrounded by a silence which is only made the more intense by that loneliest of all lone sounds, the cry of the browsing sheep.

Fired perchance by some preacher or prophet, nurtured, it may be, amid musical surroundings of an honest and a simple yet lofty sort, such a student as this might have something original to say; and it is not unreasonable to suppose that he would finally decide it was worth while to labour and to incorporate all he had learnt of natural characteristic in his art. Such a decision would cause him some trouble, for the world would insist on putting to his credit or discredit certain peculiarities which he most probably despised even more than the world did. The

original artist is apt to be considered "very eccentric."

Any student in such a case would commit a vast error if he began to doubt whether he had the right to express his own thoughts, or those which he heard around him, in the manner characteristic of himself, and not of those who, presumably, knew him better than he knew himself. It would be the old story of the fight for survival. The world around has its own thoughts and he has his. No! Let each one say what he wants to say, sing what he wants to sing, just as he wants to say or sing it. He will find (when looking for pegs to hang his thoughts on) that most of his thoughts, those that are of any moment, have occupied a good many poets and musicians, before they began to trouble him. As to the way in which he wants to say or sing a thing, he will be wise to make quite sure beforehand, that he wants to say or sing it in that particular way. As he grows, if he grow, he will find that his first way is usually modified—somewhat. It is nevertheless the same in one respect, viz., it is his own.

There be those who feel that they are something more than pretty singers of lyrics, and all such will proceed to dig out [1] their voices, in order that they may sing with conviction. To all such it may be said: "*Cultivate your dramatic gifts, but do not forget that lyric singing is not only a safeguard against the ruin which easily overtakes so called dramatic*

[1] So many voices are apparently tenorlets of great jugular and cartilaginous purity and limited to about an octave in range.

singing, but is in itself the end of all things in the vocal art. True lyric singing is the most difficult and the most perfect of all singing. But remember, pretty lyric singing becomes truthful lyric singing only when the student has included all kinds of compositions in his vocal repertoire. In a word, lyric and dramatic singing are both indispensable to the vocal student, and each is the complement of the other."

Now, when great song is waiting in a man's soul for the means of expression, the question arises, how is the work to be done? Ask Nature, and an answer will be speedily forthcoming. She assures us that the same laws govern the human body and its forces, as have been found to hold the universe together. Slowly, very slowly, the student who is true to himself in the best sense, will discover that he can get the forces of his soul and of his body to bear upon his vocal chords. Gradually there will come a ring of truth and sincerity into the singing voice, though that voice may not be large or loud at first—for some years, it may be. Singing below rather than above his strength, seeking control of line,[1] of time and tune, he will be content to do each day's work as it comes, and will not despise the day of little things. Some original germs communicated to him by his ancestors, and nourished perchance by his own efforts, and by his surroundings, are there waiting to come to birth. Nature secretes, and waits till the hour arrives, and then brings out from her store things new and old. She starts from small begin-

[1] See Chap. I., note, p. 8.

nings; the student of voice must do the same, carrying small, then larger burdens, and training his carrying power to bear the great, by first bearing the small. Too many of us, modern singers, start with the rôle of Hercules.

Again, let us repeat, Nature uses all she finds to use; it is only when she is certain that she has no use for a thing that she casts it on one side and lets it die. This is a comforting doctrine, and we all emulate her instinctively. Nature produces nothing in vain; she lays it all under contribution, even as singers make instant use of all they find at hand *to make an effect with*. The difference between Nature and ourselves (many of us) is, that we cling to an effect—long after our reason has warned us that it is of no permanent artistic value.[1] We poor singers dislike intensely the idea of slow growth, and hasten to appear in heavy and exacting rôles, whether we be ready or not. True, competition is fierce, and opportunities for distinction scarce; still, *faith* never fails, and premature decay and ruin are the certain results of an unduly rapid advance. No sculptor starts with statue-making; he first of all learns to model in clay.

Most people, whether they know it or not, are endowed by Nature with certain dramatic and musical tendencies,[2] which are there for a purpose, and which often settle the matter by forcing their way out. Nature provides means for the activity of all vital forces; nor does she supply us with tendencies, without giv-

[1] Vide the modern ballad.

[2] See p. 2, Chap. I.

ing us a medium for expression, *i.e.*, a voice, *adequate for the task*. Some such faith is generally necessary, for voice and the command over it are for years utterly inadequate to enable many of us to say what we desire to say in our own style. Some years ago a new singer appeared as the *Herald* in "Lohengrin." He had been assured that, while *he* was in himself dramatic, his *voice* was lyric; and he was warned that to attempt such a *rôle* meant vocal ruin and professional extinction. It was a trying moment to the young singer; but the inner-self triumphed over fear: the attempt was made, and proved to be the foundation of his subsequent career. No one is endowed with compelling dramatic instincts and then left without a voice to express them. Nature is too good a workman to make a man dramatic and his voice lyric. If the dramatic is suffered to make its presence felt, it will produce a voice, or it will discover it; for the fact is that the voice is there, whether you use it or no. The voice for you, *your* voice, is there. A dramatic man with a lyric voice is an impossibility. *Dramatic "colour" is a mental quantity which man imparts to the voice, and is the result of a mental state.* The quantity of tone will be affected, doubtless by bodily limitations, to a degree; but the quality, or the timbre will depend entirely upon the quality of the brain, and upon the amount of technique acquired to transmit, through the voice, the dramatic picture conjured up in the singer's brain.

The dramatic is not flesh; it is spirit! [1]

[1] The spirit has of course to be manifested by the flesh.

To return to the case of the young singer who made his first appearance as the *Herald* in "Lohengrin." He apparently was somewhat of a rebel. For the benefit of all young rebels, let it be noted, that unless your cause be right, your commissariat in order, and your quick-firing guns all up to date, rebellion is a dangerous game to play at. Our friends the Boers taught us a good lesson a while back in "taking cover," and proved it to be a very essential part of manœuvring in warfare. The vital principle is that life must be safe-guarded, and all unnecessary exposure and risk avoided. Rebellion has very often proved dangerous, and would have been fatal to the singer whose case we are considering, had he not alternately hoped and despaired of his voice for three whole years before the opportunity came of taking the field. He had, so he assures the writer, clung to first principles; had practised his exercises (very simple ones) *with his brain*. All loud sounds were left severely alone. He never sang anything which might tempt him to launch out, vocally; and he gave his throat the opportunity to forget former contortions, thus depriving it of its alleged right to make noises in its own little way. Throats become fixed and habituated to certain positions, in speaking as well as in singing. *Very few people speak correctly, and consequently, when they sing, they do not sing correctly.* Those, therefore, who have sung as amateurs, must become proficient in forgetting former methods and habits.

The spirit of daring is thoroughly British (heaven

be praised!), and the Anglo-Saxon has developed the habit of rushing at five-barred gates; but in vocal matters he does not use discretion. As a rule, singers at their *start* "just get up and sing" such pieces as they ought not to attempt, until the primary student-period is over. They *will not* sing softly, wisely and well; they insist on getting, from the very first, *something which they call tone*. What they will, that they sing; and what they will is mostly what the public demands. The public asks more than the singer can safely give, unless he have first relieved himself of disabilities which the artificial life of civilisation entails upon us, the children of the twentieth century. He should be cautious and judicious if he desire not to add to the instances of immature and hopelessly distorted use of the voice, which may be heard from week to week. Vocal decay proceeds with great rapidity, and there ensues finally in alas! too many cases, nothing but the hollow clang of a worn-out organ, long before singers have attained to anything like mature, intellectual growth. The unconscious pathos of the vocal stage is terrific.

One thing alone justifies the spirit of daring and rebellion, and that is *faith born of work, wisdom begotten of technique;* and the technique must be of the right kind. Empty compliments are fatal. Vocal inefficiency and decay are prevalent, nor is it pleasant to be compelled to make such pointed allusion to them; but they can be cured only if we confess that they exist. Sickness of any sort, undefined and unacknowledged, is full of unpleasant possibilities.

Instrumentalists teach vocalists a valuable lesson in regard to the importance of technique, shutting themselves up for years in order that they may overcome technical difficulties with assurance. Point after point is assailed with pertinacity. Great pianists, *e.g.*, practise so as to play technically well; but this is not all, their aim is so to exercise their fingers that they become connecting links between their souls and the keyboard. In other words, *their art becomes unconscious*. Vocalists can get no better lesson than to listen attentively to great pianists, and, especially, to violinists, who teach in a pre-eminent manner what melody is. A great violinist is a great singer. Every earnest student recognises that his work must be centrifugal, that is, the radiating of influences from within outward, and not *vice-versa*. There is assuredly such a thing as a muscular effort, but the happiest results are obtained when the body is disciplined daily to own the sway of the mind; mind *plus* muscle is better than muscle *minus* mind.

Before passing on to purely muscular and technical matters it is necessary to devote some attention to the question of *effort* in singing. *Does singing imply effort?* Yes. But as "*ars celandi artem*" is the accepted rule, this effort must not be apparent, at any point, except for a purpose. A palpable effort, which the vocalist is forced to show, ruins his performance. Reverting to the description of singing as a natural function (in a derivative sense),[1] it would be correct

[1] Singing is a state of art—not of unaided nature, *i.e.*, nature in the limited sense.

to say that *the natural is not effortless*. The natural is the result of normal effort; it is *undue* effort which is unnatural. That effort which goes beyond individual power, and which does not utilise all available resources, is *not* natural. To produce any result, the wise man will seek and utilise all possible means designed to help in that production. All vital principles must be equally prominent.

Natural singing which seems effortless—how shall we best define it? In its proper place, later on in this volume, the student will find some remarks concerning the muscular system, and the play of it in the act of singing. Meanwhile let us proceed to announce baldly in this connection an astounding discovery! The human frame has a lower as well as an upper part, *a back* as well as a front, a fine sounding-board in the roof of the mouth, and brilliant resonators in the buccal and nasal cavities; and strangely enough, *all these parts* are meant to be used in singing! Now, singing which is natural and *seems effortless*, brings all the natural organism into play. Tone is natural and convincing *when the whole man is in it*. Singing is neither natural nor convincing when there is apparently only a throat, a chest, or a diaphragm, an upper without a lower part of the frame in it. This latter is, of course, only a broad statement. Again, that kind of singing is not natural which displays sensuousness to the omission of intellect, and which sacrifices linguistic purity to so-called "beauty" of tone. A Psalm of David calls upon fires and flames, frosts and snows to "praise the

Lord." It ends by calling upon "everything that hath breath" to praise Him. The universe, animate and inanimate, is summoned to chant a universal *Te Deum*. May we not in all seriousness counsel the wise singer to call upon the snows of intellect, the flames of sense, the universal man, not forgetting "everything that hath breath," nor anything that has to do with it (for "the breath is the life") to unite in producing a voice with which a man may praise God?

The whole spiritual system, spirit, mind, sense—*soul*, together with the whole muscular system from feet to head, will be in the wise man's singing, *and the whole man will be in the tone.*

CHAPTER VI

WHAT IS SINGING? (CONTINUED)

Voice, *a medium of* TOUCH.—Sense of hearing derived from that of touch.—Sound or tone (communicated) takes two agents to produce, viz., the sound-maker and the sound-receiver.—Expression "a pressing out."—Means of voice-making, vocal chords and breath.—Artistic results only real test of tone.—Vocal chords and freedom.—*Vibrato* and "*Wobble.*"—Normal relaxation.—Nature's lessons.—Dry, mechanical technique.—Nature's purpose, from a common-sensible point of view, in producing voice.—Mental activity indispensable for correct vocal technique.—Force, no remedy.—Voice, voice, voice.—Paint, paint, paint.—Art, art, art!—Farinelli's day over.—Pronouncing apparatus.—Aristotle's Ethics.—Technique a *sine qua non*.—Singing instinct, and *principle* in art.—First definition.—The term "natural" again.—Progress and Evolution again.—Fundamentals.—Pronunciation *versus* "*vocalising.*"—"*Vocalising*" a mere trick.—*All words essentially vocal.*

THE sense of hearing is derived from the sense of touch, being an amplification of a function which we may describe as physical. Tone is often called "touching," which it is, in a *physical* as well as in a *sentimental* sense. It is generally imagined that, when one speaks or sings, a something, which we call voice, or sound, issues from the lips and communicates with the drum of the listener's ear. The truth is that nothing *in the way of sound* proceeds out of the lips at all. Sound has no separate existence; the speaker or singer merely sets air-waves in motion,

which strike on the drum of the listener's ear; and he—the speaker or singer—thereby communicates with the hearer's brain, wherein results what we call sound. It therefore takes two, at least, to make a tone (communicated); and (wondrous thought!) the listener's brain affects the meaning of the singer's or speaker's tone—for *himself*. No wonder musicians fall out over tone-quality, for each one hears, for himself, a different kind of tone! The "timbre" may be "right" for one, and "wrong" for another. Composers, too, sometimes disagree over each other's compositions. It takes two at least to *make* a "composition" (as it does to make a tone)—for the man who listens. He indeed must on no account leave himself out of the reckoning. For the most part, we do not forget ourselves, though we may sometimes be unconscious of others, and of what they are saying. Hence the wonderful variety of opinions concerning the same composition. And all due, primarily, to the sense of hearing, and to the necessity of more than one to "make" a tone, or a composition.

From the point of view of physics it is more exact to speak of the human voice as a medium of touch, than of sound. We touch people just as truly with the voice as we do with the hand, the only difference being that we use the intervening air as a means of contact, and not the hand. The touch of the human hand has its characteristics—so also has the touch of the human voice. There are local, superficial, limp, as well as constitutional, profound, firm touches of the hand, according as the movement culminating in

the touch is profound, constitutional, firm, or the reverse. Fix your attention on the upper part of the body, and you lay the foundation of your vocal touch too high; you force too much air to reverberate in the bony and cartilaginous cavities of head and chest, with the result that your vocal "touch" is bony and cartilaginous. The fleshy and muscular parts of the frame are necessary to convey the warmth of feeling, without which the human "touch" (vocal) fails in artistic passion; and it is by co-ordinate activity of the fleshy and muscular parts of the body, that the "touch" or voice becomes human and artistic. The "touch" of the superficial breather is hard and inelastic,—it has too much of the skeleton in it. Dr. Hans Richter once begged his violinists to "play with the *meat* of the fingers." The singer or speaker must employ the *meat*, if his "touch" (his voice) is to be efficient. As with physical, so with spiritual qualities—all psychic attributes must contribute their quota to the "touch." The whole body and the whole soul must be combined, so that the singer may reach the whole of the listener's personality. The touch must be that of the entire human being, so that the communication may awake response in the entire human being who listens.

Nay! there is no need for haste; the student shall hear, in due time how this comes to pass. *When* this marvel happens, and *the whole man* physically and spiritually *sings, all men must listen.* Unification is irresistible. "*Omnis porro pulchritudinis forma, unitas est,*" said old S. Augustine.

If one may use the simile, the chemical fusion of all necessary, component elements alone can produce that wonderful "substance"—voice, which can and does, in a comparative degree at any rate, annihilate space, *i.e.*, space in reference to art-performances; nor does this annihilation seem unnecessary in our day, when one voice must vanquish a hundred instruments, more or less, in buildings capable of holding anything from two [1] to twenty thousand people. All legitimate means then must be used (and all natural means are such) for the production of the required result. The required result, in our case, is *voice*—the product of two forces, inspiratory and expiratory, disciplined into a state of balanced activity, acting on the vocal chords, and resulting in a controlled expression—*i.e.*, a pressing out.

What are the physical means designed for voice production? They are two:—

1. Vocal chords. 2. Breath.

We all know there are two little bands stretched across the larynx which are set in motion by the breath, and so produce voice. A number of organs and muscles affect the action of the vocal chords and of the breath; the management of these various organs and muscles constitutes the singer's technique (in one sense). It would be of but small advantage

[1] By the way, it is much easier for the word-singing voice to beat a body of a few hundred instruments in a room which holds 20,000 than in one which holds 5,000. There is more space for the voice to get away from the orchestra. Cf. Albert and Queen's Halls.

here to reproduce encyclopædic knowledge in regard to phonetics and anatomy; it behoves us rather to keep to practical culture and common-sense as far as may be. Furthermore, neither in speech nor in song can the muscular action of organs be seen, and if they could, there would be but few interesting phenomena to note, since false conditions of breathing make ordinary vocal efforts absolutely valueless for purposes of demonstration. We do not therefore reproduce studies in physics. As has been said above, no ocular observation can discover to us the working of the vocal machinery, if the singing or speaking be of the sane sort; and with other kinds we have no concern. We must be guided by an artistic standard rather than by diagrams of muscles. *Our only test will be—artistic results.*

Let us first take the vocal chords:

The first requisite for the natural play of these little bands is large liberty. They must be free to do unimpeded work, nor must they be pushed and hustled from below. Hustling means fettering of free action, and in art as in other things fetters mean death. By the word liberty, one indicates the mean between captivity and license. Captivity of the vocal chords spells "*vibrato*," and license spells "*wobble*." Nay! the student need not fix his affrighted gaze upon his vocal chords, nor yet regard them as the centre of his existence; the fulcrum of power is not there; no one need fear his vocal chords. Treat them well and give them liberty, that is all. They are harmless and inoffensive little things; yet for all

that some of us treat them with a good deal of unnecessary severity, the result being that they give forth sounds which do not belong to them, and of which, if the truth were told, they are heartily ashamed. Badly treated, they shriek, roar, bellow; well treated—they sing.

The mental state (*we must always begin there*) which ensures fair and just treatment of the vocal chords is a state of *normal relaxation*. Take, *e.g.*, the state you are in when the blood is vitalised with fresh ozone, when life smiles and all goes well; that is what is meant by relaxation. Now walk up to a mirror, glance at your eye, forehead, cheeks, jaw, and the general "set" of your face. If you could sing in that state, you would reflect freedom and disembarrassment; your vocal chords would emit truthful singing tones. Just treatment (of vocal chords) ensures the "just expression," of which the Frenchman tells us. Now come, sing to us!

What has happened? Forehead wrinkled, eyes glaring, cheeks hard, jaw set, neck-tendons standing out like whipcords; and all because you have tried to sing "Ah" or "Eh"! If you were to *say*, to merely pronounce "Ah" under the same mental and bodily conditions, that is with your throat fixed in the same position as it was in when you tried to sing "Ah," it would sound like the "Ah" of a hobgoblin which frightens children. The farther we go from the heart of Nature, the farther we go from just and simple expression; interfere with freedom of movement and you clog the power of utterance. *Nature focusses all*

her power on the point of resistance, and her action is free. To insist, as too many, alas! do, upon a dry period of mere physical technique at the start of a vocal student's career is subversive of the highest interests of art. By all means learn "how," but be mindful of the "what"[1] at the same time. All arguments to the contrary are futile, because they have Nature's evolution against them. Nature has something to say, and she finds out the best way of saying it; but in her search after the means, she does not forget what she wanted to say. John Fiske, the genial and profound American writer, remarks that we cannot tell at what period brain supplanted muscle as a ruling power in man's upward journey. But the change was made, and in the course of time came coordinate thought, and means were found to express that thought. Let us repeat that when Nature makes an effort in any direction, the object for which that effort is made is always present. She wanted a ready medium by which to express her thought, and thought finally invented voice; then, through a laborious course, she evolved such a technique as would suffice to do the work of the day or epoch in that period.

It is useless and worse to disregard this simple fact, simple but very significant; viz., that if you think something worth the thinking (and think it with concentration); say something worth the saying (and say it vividly); do something worth the doing

[1] All that is meant by the "what" here is that the student should *think* one word at a time, with reference to the context.

(and do it as if your mind were in it)—you will finally think, say, and do it worthily. Learn separately "how" to do a thing, *i.e.*, without reference to the particular "what" you want to do, and your "what" will always puzzle you in the doing thereof. Forgetfulness of this truth makes students' initial study dull and unedifying, and their efforts painful. There is no concentrated mental activity in either, and consequently there is undue physical exertion; and the sung "Ah," or whatever sound the student seeks to produce, is not at first a success—its chief demerit, in the student's opinion, being, that it is not loud enough.[1]

Relaxation is dependent purely on mind, and we have seen that without relaxation the vocal chords cannot work properly. The tone which issues forth being at first not a success, the student forthwith tries to *force* the vocal chords to do his bidding, willy-nilly. Now, forcing is a mistaken policy with willing agents. The student insists upon the vocal chords saying "Ah," and that "Ah" must have what he calls *big tone* in it from the first. Coaxing is better, with willing agents. If they do not obey at once and give the desired tone, there is a reason for their refusal. The reason why there comes no easy flowing sound from the vocal chords is the fact that they are so *held* that they cannot make such a sound as you want, without your hearing the creaking of the machinery; and, further, it is the fact that you have not

[1] This has been proved, in the cases of all pupils, young or advanced, by the present writer

learnt the control of breath which a co-ordinate muscular activity alone can give, that explains why there cannot come at first the loud clear tones you so earnestly desire. Without this control the only thing the vocal chords will do, when you set your teeth and say to them, "You *shall* make a loud tone," is to make an explosive, blatant, insignificant commonplace *noise*.

Now reverse this process! Think easy thoughts, *i.e.*, concentrate your mind on "sunshine and true, sweet sounds" and incorporate them in your "Ah"; think, look, breathe relaxation, and your vocal chords will sigh relaxation, contentedly enough. This free, unrigid tone, this tone of relaxation, is the basis of all vocal thought. To be sure, the tone will not be such as would make a judicious friend start in terror if he happened to be in the room; he would merely look round and feel relaxation, and would thank you for a pleasant experience. Nor will the phrase or even note which you sing be very prolonged. *A long, loud note or phrase is merely a matter of breath control.*[1]

The great point however to observe is that the sound, whether it be a mere whisper or a sung tone, will contain an element of *you*, and of *you at your best* (*i.e.*, of your mind concentrated on a worthy object). When one says "you," one means an undistorted, unstrangulated "you"—easy and natural. On such a sound as we have indicated, one can

[1] N.B.—Relaxation is only possible with a satisfying controlled breath.

"paint," or make a real crescendo—*a very rare achievement*. This kind of tone will take on any colour you can imagine, it will manifest love, hate, pity or fear. It will, it is true, be an infant sound, but it will have life and health in it, and it will grow into manhood, broad and deep. It was once said that the three requisites of a singer are, 1—Voice. 2—Voice. 3—Voice. As well tell a painter that his chief matters are, 1—Paint. 2—Paint. 3—Paint. Of course, a singer must have a voice as a painter must have paints; but the great need of artists is Art. Voice is effective—for effect, and for money-making. But surely these two are not our chief good; we live for something which cannot be attained by mere voice or money. Farinelli's days are over, except by way of amusement.

The future is great in possibilities, which will become actualities for those who choose to make them such.

As with the vocal chords, so with other parts of the vocal mechanism. You, the student, are not to hold your lips thus and so, nor to get your tone forward on to them nor on to your teeth, nor are you to pin your tongue to any particular part of your mouth, nor to open your mouth in any set mode, nor to brace your shoulders, nor to heave your chest, nor to force open your throat. All you have to do is to relax and to banish fear, and this you do by putting something in its place, *i.e.*, you occupy the ground with other thoughts which are to be found in the text and in the music.

We have already considered different styles of singing in our search after a definition of it which will harmonise with Nature. We have sought to build on vital principles and to reject the non-essential and the vicious. Aristotle has, in his "Ethics," by the method he adopted in order to arrive at a definition of happiness, supplied the world with considerable food for thought. Mayhap one day some philosopher will give us a definition of singing on similar lines. It is strange that the world is still prosecuting its search for a definition of real happiness, such as the Stagirite occupied himself with. Our next great thinker will throw a light upon the subject, if he give us "The Ethics of Singing" on really philosophic lines.

But to return to our own pursuit. In our search we are impelled to consider technique, which is essential. Craftsmanship is a necessity. The question is, what kind of technique must it be? Surely it must be based on fundamental, on natural principles. There must be no breaking away from truths taught by evolution, to follow unessential vanities. The elemental *singing instinct* which men have in common with the birds is, without a doubt, at the root of the vocal art. Nor must the instinctive desire for song ever be lost sight of; for out of it comes the power which makes for beauty and charm (in one sense æsthetic charm) of voice. But as art grows so instinct —as the ruling force—must give way to principle. Instinctive, impulsive actions are of, comparatively, very small importance in the moral world, when set

side by side with moral actions which have their spring in *principle*. So in art. Instinct which has developed into principle (without loss of instinct's essentials, be it said) is a far greater power than undeveloped instinct. Through this development, a new form of beauty appears, which we will call LASTING. In technique, instinct will play a by no means unimportant part. As the student practises, this very force, under the direction of reason and imagination, will enable him to acquire living, transfusing craftsmanship. The coldly intellectual or the coldly mechanical act is not a human or a natural act. Why then insist for years on super-inducing an unnatural and perfunctory state of mind upon the student, by making of technique a mere muscular exercise?

From a rapid survey of all that has been said we might put forth a tentative definition, and pronounce singing to be: "*An instinctively musical and poetic, natural and controlled, expression of an inner self, which, enriched by the inspired creations of poets and musicians, proves its opulence while making these creations audible.*" A trifle long! Is *this* better? "*Singing is the natural use of all endowments, to express all natural thoughts, sentiments, and emotions.*" The reader will permit us to remind him that the word "natural" implies all such endowments, thoughts, sentiments, and emotions as are conceivable in the mind and soul of man—the crowning work of Nature; and moreover that this Nature is the Nature of Evolution, *i.e.*, Nature working and

developing progressively toward betterment,—which is the only common-sensible view to take. It is impossible to convert a book on vocal ethics and technique into a singing lesson, though the substitution of exercises for principles would be easy enough, and to write a handy book of rules would not be over hard. If the reader however will only read, carefully and methodically, this section "What is singing?" from beginning to end, he will observe that an effort has been made to present the case *as it has grown out of a singer's life, and that there is one idea running all through, viz., the idea of progress, out of and through the physical to the psychic.*

The public will surely in the end appreciate what a singer's life may mean, and that he is (if rightly regarded) a factor in national progress.[1] All other views are unworthy. Students, serious students, will also learn, it is hoped, to keep fast hold of *the why and the wherefore*, as well as the *how*, to do it. It may be said that the method, and perhaps the terminology of this book, present difficulties to the ordinary singing student; but all such as deserve to become artists will not be turned back because there are a few lions in the path. Later on will be found simple directions, but meanwhile we keep fundamentals before us. It is absolutely necessary, then, in teaching and learning technique, to bring *mind* to bear upon it. When one says "mind," one means the whole instinctive, imaginative and reasoning power of man. Dull, dead muscular exercises are worse than useless.

[1] In virtue of his art.

Why does the poor pianoforte have to suffer such assaults as are made upon it in our day? Surely it is because of "technique" gone mad! And in the singer's case, why do we have such vocal violence, and insincere pretence? Why is linguistic and rhetorical truth almost generally sacrificed to so-called "melodic" effectiveness? Assuredly it is "technique" minus mind, which supplies the reason for this aberration.

The fact is that no one can pronounce "Ah" without thinking "Ah," and that very vividly. The "Ah" must emanate, must come forth out of an emotioned thought. Some situation must be presented to the mind which will call forth "Ah" in response. So also with all cardinal sounds. The intellect and the imagination must always be in active play; and the power of clear thought must be felt at the centre of gravity, so to speak, *i.e.*, the brain. This mental activity affects all the organs concerned in technique. For example, when the writer in early student days concentrated his attention upon his tongue, he found that this member became very stiff and unruly indeed.[1] When, on the other hand, he relaxed mentally, and thought *only* of what he had to pronounce (the breath being rightly controlled), his tongue reposed peacefully enough in its place at the bottom of his mouth. That is all any well-behaved tongue need do! Force the tongue, by trying to keep it flat

[1] A great deal of attention is given to this member in many quarters; with the result that the tongue becomes something like a ball in the mouth.

at the bottom of the mouth, and you cannot but vitiate the quality of the tone, making it distorted and unnatural, while pronunciation becomes a thing of the past—or future.

On the other hand leave the larynx, as a whole, in a state of quiet repose, and the tone and word assume at once a histrionic, eloquent character; so that *l'expression juste*, in embryo, becomes an essential quality, without further delay, in your singing. An unrigid larynx means a ruly tongue, and a ruly tongue means simple, natural pronunciation. The very singing of "Ah," "Eh," etc., provided you *think* them, before uttering them, will tilt the tongue so as to differentiate sounds. *All pronouncing which cramps the throat is wrong.* There is no part of the vocal range where trickery (so called *vocalising*) is necessary; no altering of the character of the word is admissible; else you might as well sing in Choctaw and expect people to get the full effect of English! The so-called "vocalising" of a word is a false and a lazy procedure. Alter the form and character of the words, and you ruin words and music. The natural principle is: Relax throughout the upper part of the body, relax at the throat, place the burden of tone production on that part of the body which is best able to bear it, viz., the lower, and you will pronounce like a reasonable and an educated being. Very strange it sounded to hear a soprano of repute, who so stiffened her larynx that she could not and did not sing "*Hear*, ye Israel." She made a noise, she "*vocalised*," so that the word might have

been "Anything, ye Israel!" It was a little "vocalising," a sad trick! *All words are vocal, essentially.*

We are slowly and unconsciously drawing near our consideration of breathing and tone. Having discussed vocal chords and tongue, etc., and the kind of technique which the student will cultivate, we might perhaps remind ourselves, before passing on, that it is ours, as vocal students, to emancipate the tongue, the cavities, and the vocal chords, and to offer them no further violence. They are willing servants, obedient to every call, ready to produce the exact resonance, colour, quality, which are vocal evidences of thought necessary for characterisation and emotional differentiation. They will convey every word and sentiment, actual and ideal, native to humanity. The best way to exercise them is to take a phrase out of a lyric, or out of an aria (*cantilene*), and to treat it as an exercise. Study the context and spend one year [1] —if need be—on the first word; use only deeply controlled breathing, and be not satisfied except when the sung sound is expressive in a simple, eloquent manner. All heavy vocal exercises should be avoided at first. Above all, *never "vocalise,"—always sing.*[2]

[1] A long time, you say! Well, yes, it is even so. But the more secure the first, the surer the second step. You have to change your mind, your way of thinking about things. You cannot change the habits of 20 or 30 years in six months. But change of mind brings change of body.

[2] See definition, p. 81.

CHAPTER VII

BREATHING

Pronunciation the student's sheet-anchor.—Pure speech means pure song.—General bodily activity in breathing.—Gradual training.—Diaphragm and vocal chords.—*Entente cordiale.*—Conservation of energy.—Practical suggestions.—Singer must breathe from below-upward.—Singer's breath acquired.—Is therefore voluntary.—Will-power must be exercised.—Deep breathing and control a matter of will.—Constant practice establishes relationship between will and diaphragm, the principal instrument of breath.—Anatomy of breathing.—Statement by Dr. John Green.

The sheet-anchor of vocalists ought to be pure pronunciation—pure in regard to *linguistic fitness*, and arising from general culture. Pure pronunciation (musical, sustained, fitting) once achieved ensures right tone production, and consequently right tone. Tone which is correlative to the thought in the word cannot be wrong. If the character of the tone fit the character of the word, the tone is essentially just.[1] Every word projects its own atmosphere, and that atmosphere will be reproduced in the singer's tone.[2] Singing-tone is true and just when it is histrionic, as Mmes. Sarah Bernhardt's or Eleanore Duse's tone, when at their best, is histrionic. There is perfect cor-

[1] This test never fails, as all fanciful tests of tone must fail.

[2] N.B.—If the tone be inelastic, *i.e.*, not eloquent, the breathing must needs be wrong.

relation between the tone and the thought which is in the brain, and which finds utterance in the actress's work. As good actors' tone fits the word, so also must good singers' tone fit the word. The sung word should have the penetrating power which belongs to the fine elocutionist, whose utterance, as such, approaches ordinary speech more nearly than does the singer's, and is also, in general, more rationally effective. But ordinary, conversational tone (of course) could never become a singing tone; and yet it is a fact that if you change, to an infinitesimal degree, the character of the word when you sing, making it other than that it is when correctly spoken, your tone *cannot* be the true tone. If we took the trouble to talk correctly the case might be different.

What are the means whereby we can not only bring the singer's work up to the level of the actor's, but even improve upon it? How can we best secure the fine pronunciation, the pure linguistic elocution, without which singing is comparatively an imperfect and an insignificant art? As in the treatment of vocal chords, all physiological terms were studiously avoided, so also in regard to breathing we keep as clear as we can of the shibboleths of the schools. Every person who chooses to be docile can apply the following simple principle: Breathe with the lower rather than with the upper part of the trunk. He who breathes with the upper, and forgets that he has a lower part to his trunk is sure to fail as a singer.[1]

[1] The case is the same in females as it is in males. Generally, men breathe deeper than women. Men and women should breathe

The writer during his early training made this error, and felt famished for air when engaged at his studies in singing. We have the lower as well as the upper part of the body to deal with. In truth, it is the lower rather than the upper part that is our concern. There *is* a lower part to the trunk. Our learned friend smiles! Well, but so many people forget that fact! We are all so liable to be conscious of the upper part during respiration, and so much pother is made about the singer's "chest," that it astonished the writer when he discovered that his strength lay in the lower part; and, as has been already said, he was struck with amazement when he found that he had a back; and that the trunk was poised on two good pedestals. Strangest of all it dawned upon him that it was possible to bring every energetic force in his body and its supports to bear upon the diaphragm, *directly or indirectly*, and consequently upon the vocal chords!

The action of the muscular system as a whole upon the singing organism has never been fully demonstrated. It would certainly seem to be a fact that there is a *supplementary and co-ordinate power* which

in the same way. Art should destroy artificiality in dress. As a rule men do breathe deeper than women, in song especially, and accordingly they have less "whiteness" in the voice. In the majority of cases female singing, though possessing something akin to brilliance, is deficient in real sympathy and expression. Women are seldom rigid at the throat, men seldom unrigid, with the result that women's voices are generally loose and flexible enough, though lacking in verisimilitude; while men's voices are, in general, stiff and unpliant (compared to women's), though possessed of more truthful fitness to the subjects treated in song.

can be developed throughout the *whole muscular system* from the feet upward, the effect of which can be distinctly felt both upon the diaphragm and the vocal chords. Yet, no one need make war upon his diaphragm, nor try to force it to do in two months the work it demands two years to accomplish. All safe athletic training is slow and gentle; so also is artistic training. The diaphragm will work effectively if it be well treated and helped by the muscles directly connected with it; these muscles again can give greater succour to the diaphragm if they are helped by those muscles with which they have a coordinate acquaintance. But, ask the diaphragm to carry all the weight which should be proportionately distributed all over the body, and the poor thing will slip, and the singer will gasp. Again, if the muscles connected with the diaphragm are bereft of the sympathy of the great muscles of the thighs and the legs, they too lose heart and occasionally strike.[1]

Curiously enough, the vocal chords and the diaphragm are, at first, sworn foes—to all appearance. Relax at the throat, *i.e.*, give the vocal chords their freedom, thus throwing on the diaphragm the task of controlling the breath, and that organ most ungraciously refuses to do anything of the sort. On the other hand, the vocal chords refuse to speak graciously when the diaphragm demands the right to work effectively. Very difficult indeed it was for the writer to promote an *entente cordiale* between these two seemingly belligerent forces. The reason prob-

[1] "Division of labour" is the method to pursue.

ably was this: it is not easy to persuade the human brain to think of two things at once. Long and weary was the continuance of this puzzle to the writer. At last came the key, which Mother Nature, with her usual kindness, supplied. *Conservation of energy* was her solution of the difficulty. "*Get all necessary breath and keep it, without rigidity or undue effort.*" Such was her counsel. One does not need a Nasmyth hammer to crack a nut, and the nut the singer has to crack at first is only a little one. *Procure the necessary amount of breath to make a whisper, and then convert it into tone.* That is all. But see that you waste no breath; *sigh contentedly and slowly*, then take a breath as deep as that sigh. When you have it, keep it; and then *sigh it out* slowly and under control, so that you could suddenly press more, or press less, at will, with the muscles of the abdomen and the back, and could stop the sigh if you so desired. There must be *no hissing noise.* After doing this several times, convert the whisper into tone. Begin to sing *instantly*, when you have your singing breath under control; do not wait to think; sing at once, and make use of your motive force, or you will waste it. There must be no escape, no waste of breath, no collapse of the diaphragm—even to the extent of a hair's breadth.

The diaphragm will show you at once by its position whether there be any escape of breath, for it will have collapsed; your throat will tell you the same story, for it will be rigid; the quality of your whisper will confirm the evidence, for it will be hissing un-

naturally. *Sane people do not hiss.* Your ear will help you to knowledge. The training of the ear is one half of the training of the voice, but your mind is the court of appeal when in doubt.

Let us say it all once again. Take a little breath, deep as a contented sigh; preserve it at the diaphragm, and be not prodigal at the start; if you are wasting breath, or have taken too little, your face will tell the tale, for it will look anxious, and you will be *staring* out of those eyes of yours. After a deep, easy inhalation (with no heaving of shoulders or of chest), keep the breath under deep control, and do not imagine you are dividing yourself into two, at the point where the diaphragm makes its outer rim apparent. Remember the power your mind has over your muscles, and use the whole muscular system co-ordinately—*from below—upward.* *Think* "control," and WILL it (by means of the muscular system), and control will finally come. A good, deep breath will manifest itself by a tidal [1] filling up of the trunk with breath, in the anterior, the dorsal, and the lateral regions, *all round the waist.* The body will swell gently (not heave) in front, at the back, and at the sides. A good control of breath will make itself apparent by the absence of any sudden collapse at any one of the three (more properly four) points mentioned. Enormously strong muscles are brought into play to help the diaphragm, but no proper use can be made of them if the mind thinks of the

[1] N.B.—This word is not used here in the technical sense, but merely to mark the gradual influx of the tide of breath.

breathing function as though it were performed from above-down instead of from below-upward.

Let us now make a little excursion into the regions of the anatomy of breathing, because of the supreme importance of the subject to the singer. We have spoken of enormously strong muscles, which are connected with the diaphragm. These are the "rectus abdominis" (front centre), the "obliquus externus" and the "obliquus internus," and the "transversalis" (lateral). These are the muscles which, when relaxed, permit the descent of the diaphragm, and the filling up of the lungs with air to their utmost capacity; and which, through their contraction, force the diaphragm upward,[1] thus becoming most powerful controlling agents in expelling the air. When the lungs have been emptied of air, as a preliminary to the passive inflation which must precede any attempt at tone-emission, we relax the abdominal muscles, *thus permitting the entire weight of the abdominal viscera to aid in the descent of the diaphragm*, with consequent maximum enlargement of the capacity of the thorax. This is essentially a passive act, the air under these conditions flowing freely in, to completely fill the lungs, in their entire extent.

Sir Charles Bell, in his account of the action of the muscles in respiration, makes one thing quite clear, viz., *the aid given to breathing by the downward movement of the abdominal viscera*, when the abdominal muscles are relaxed. The enlargement of the chest

[1] Cf. pp. 1, 2, 3.

in inspiration is a muscular act; the effect of the action of the inspiratory muscles is an increase in the size of the chest cavity in the vertical, in the lateral, and in the antero-posterior diameters.

The writer of this volume is greatly indebted to Dr. John Green of St. Louis, Mo., U. S. A., for the lucid exposition of the act of breathing which follows:

"Respiration may be likened to the action of a pair of bellows, which we will suppose to be made without the valve in the lower board. By separating the handles, the capacity of the bellows is increased, and air is drawn in through the nozzle (inspiration). Conversely by approximating the handles, the capacity of the bellows is diminished and air is forced out through the nozzle (expiration). If we connect a reed pipe of an organ to the nozzle of the bellows, both the reed and the body of air contained in the pipe will be thrown into vibration during expiration, and will sound a note whose quality (timbre) and pitch will be determined by the construction and adjustment of the reed, and by the form and dimensions of the resonating cavity of the pipe, as well as by the blast of air.

"In the animal mechanism, the cavity of the bellows is represented by the lungs; the nozzle by the trachea (windpipe); the reed and its accessory adjusting apparatus by the vocal chords and their muscles contained within the larynx; the resonating organ pipe by the cavities of the head (pharynx, nasal cavities, and mouth); and the hands of the

bellows-blower by the muscles of inspiration and expiration.

"The principal muscle of inspiration in the mammalia, including man, is the diaphragm, a dome-shaped muscle, which, with its central fibrous or tendinous portion, forms the floor of the chest (thorax) and completely shuts off its cavity from that of the abdomen. Attached peripherally to the walls of the thorax at its base, the effect of the contraction of the muscular portion of the diaphragm is to increase the capacity of the chest, and at the same time to press downward upon the abdominal organs, thus necessitating a relaxation of the muscles which form the walls of the abdomen, and enclose and support the viscera contained within it.

"In expiration, the muscular walls of the abdomen (external oblique, internal oblique, transversalis and recti abdominis), contract upon the contained viscera, and through them press upward against the diaphragm and so elevate the floor of the chest and diminish its capacity.

"In addition to these principal muscles of inspiration and expiration, there are others whose effect is to expand the walls of the chest through their action in elevating and rotating the ribs (external intercostals, levatores costarum, serratus posticus superior, etc.), or to contract the chest by depressing the ribs (quadratus lumborum, serratus posticus inferior, internal intercostals, etc.). Furthermore the elasticity of the walls of the chest and of the lungs themselves plays an important part in relieving the expiratory

muscles of a considerable part of their burden in tranquil breathing.

"With every enlargement of the capacity of the chest, air enters through the larynx and trachea to keep the lungs full, and with every diminution of its capacity, air passes out by the same channel. In ordinary quiet breathing, not more than from twenty to twenty-five cubic inches pass into and out of the lungs in each complete act of inspiration and expiration. In deep breathing, the respiratory capacity is enormously greater than in tranquil breathing, the measured volume of air which can be expelled from the lungs, after the deepest inspiration, reaching not less than 225 cubic inches, or nearly a gallon, in a person of average stature.

"In the erect condition of the body, the shallow inspiration which ordinarily suffices for the aëration of the blood is accomplished by the conjoint action of such of the thoracic muscles as expand the chest and of the diaphragm which depresses its floor; the latter, aided by the weight of the abdominal viscera, is brought into play by relaxing the abdominal walls. The expiratory act, on the other hand, is effected by the contracting of the abdominal muscles, lifting the relaxed diaphragm, supplemented by the elastic recoil of the thoracic walls and of the lung-issue. These movements are ordinarily independent of volition, although subject, within certain limits, to voluntary control.

"Deep breathing, in which the full capacity of the lungs is utilised, is, under normal bodily conditions,

mainly a voluntary act, in which the diaphragm and the abdominal muscles play a larger rôle than in quiet breathing. Such breathing may be intelligently cultivated, and its fullest development and regulation are essential *in playing wind instruments and in singing*. In singing especially, in which fine enunciation must go hand in hand with perfect and sustained tone-production, correct breathing implies the power of controlling absolutely the flow of air from the lungs during the entire period of prolonged expiration. Such control can only be attained by assiduous and properly directed practice on strictly physiological lines. To imitate *in any degree* the laboured efforts observed in certain conditions of obstructed breath in disease, in which muscles, not ordinarily concerned in respiration are thrown into violent action, is to go altogether wrong and in violation of the fundamental laws of effective and therefore of correct breathing."

From the above exposition we gather that the singer's breathing is in reality nothing more than the amplification [1] of normal, healthy breathing; and that relaxation plays an important part in the act of inspiration; while a certain amount of aid is automatically given to expiration by the recoil of the chest-walls and of the lung-tissue. It is further made clear that chest and shoulder heaving is indicative of impeded breathing, and points to a "diseased" condition; and that though the breath of human beings in quiet breathing is independent of volition, still it

[1] Cf. p. 123.

can be (and is) made voluntary by the careful student, who sets up a voluntary control of the inspiratory and the expiratory act.[1]

[1] Wood-wind and brass instrument players would make their work easier and better if they adopted the singer's breathing (the true one).

CHAPTER VIII

BREATHING (Concluded)

Breathing (singer's) a voluntary function.—Will-power again.—Critical faculty *versus* the ear.—Linguistic fitness *versus* sensuous pleasure in song.—Character, disciplined and undisciplined.—Its effect on tone.—Decorativeness *versus* verisimilitude.—Two *prime donne* and slavery.—Sims Reeves and Jean de Reszke.—Tone and character again.—Universal tone.—Well-balanced character and sane comment.—Tone an index to character.—Constitutional *versus* local breathing.—Reeves and De Reszke again.—Albert Chevalier.—Facial expression.—Test and standard of tone.—Right breathing proved by right tone.—Pose of figure.—Recapitulation, questions.—*The word* PLUS *atmosphere the only test of tone and breathing.*—Nervousness.

The first step in vocal breathing is to set up a mental activity which centres itself on the lower part of the trunk. If this be done, the lower part (below the diaphragm) will act upon the diaphragm, aiding it in the expulsion of air, and preparing the lungs for the influx of a fresh supply, which (with deep, easy inhalation) expands the lungs, until the lobes are comfortably filled. As we have seen, the diaphragm, in quiet breathing, is an involuntary muscle; but it has voluntary tissues in it, through which, by means of practice, it becomes, within limits, voluntary. It obeys the singer's will.

Breathe with the will, i.e., intelligently, thought-

fully, slowly, and you will have no trouble with the vocal chords; nor will you be vexed by weak spots, breaks, registers, or any other of the paraphernalia supplied by credulity to charlatanism, which, greedy of its ease, plays the sphinx and the mountebank, at one and the same time.[1] How many a poor pupil has become a practical *monomaniac on the subject of "that break in my voice between D and D sharp."*

A deeply controlled breath ensures free action for the larynx and the pronouncing apparatus. Lack of freedom paralyses art. The painter, as the eminent teacher Mr. W. Shakespeare used to say, cannot paint with a stiff arm; his sweep must be firm, but elastic and expansive. The *violoncello* player must *bow* with noble elasticity; for the moment he begins to *saw* he immediately gets down to the wood, and the result is a tone—of *wood;* so with the pianist, *and with the singer*—with this exception, that, if the latter practise local or partial breathing, he gets *a tone—of cartilage.* Due control of breath is secured when the lower trunk becomes a kind of breath-reservoir, the outflow of which is regulated by the diaphragm and its attendant muscles, which thus become breath-regulators. The body is best disposed for the inflowing of a continuous breath-stream (so that breathing becomes akin to the action of organ-bellows) when control is present at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of the period of expiration; and this period

[1] If this sentence seem a trifle severe, the reader must please think on the useless torture to which thousands of students have been subjected through indefinite and insincere "instruction."

corresponds with the length of the note or phrase to be sung. The control must not end, even with the end of the phrase, or note, or period of expiration; for there is residual air to be controlled, and the singer must leave off with a little in hand—in lung rather,—just as a good golfer looks at the place where his ball sat on the tee, *after* he has delivered his stroke. The singer will thus be able to inhale enormous breaths without disturbing the set of his clavicle, and without interfering with the tone-producing or word-pronouncing mechanism. The much-desired "organ-tone" rewards the singer who practises thoughtful breathing.

Breathing is of two kinds, disciplined (acquired) and undisciplined (customary):[1] the breathing of the general public and that of the professional-breather. This last has been divided into many kinds. The battle of the breathers has raged from continent to continent, even unto the uttermost parts of the earth. Some speak of killing with a look; here we kill with a breath. All combatants are perhaps agreed on one point, viz., that the singer's breath is an acquired one of some kind, and—yes—they agree on one more point, viz., that "orthodoxy's my doxy, heterodoxy's yours."

Most of the useful scientific opinions on this matter would seem to be the result of observation as to the manner in which certain vocalists have breathed. Experimentalists have, from time to time, heard famous singers, watched their breathing, and in

[1] Customary breathing is useless to the singer in his work.

proportion as the singers produced a "*pleasing*" tone, have with due emphasis pronounced for diaphragmatic, thoracic, clavicular, or abdominal breathing. It is well to be grateful for small mercies. The world has been slowly gathering knowledge, which however needs a little sifting before it can be called wisdom.

The human ear, without the aid of the linguistic and critical faculty, would appear to be by no means a safe guide to true tone and just expression. "I know what I like and I know what music is; I am very fond of music." We have often heard this confession on which most edifices—the settled opinions around us—rest. They have a sandy foundation. According as musicians lean toward decorativeness or verisimilitude the question of vocal right and wrong, and of contributory bodily conditions will be variously decided. *The raison d'être of the human voice is essentially verisimilitude; decorativeness is merely a condition of that verisimilitude.* Musicians differ enormously as to what kind of tone is correct; nor is this to be wondered at, for their tastes do not agree, and their characters vary. The conductor of an important London Opera Company once astonished some of his hearers by declaring that a certain voice of toothsome tone and railway-steam-engine-whistle-timbre was the best he had ever heard; and that another singer who gurgled most confidentially to himself, was the finest bass. Nasal, frontal, jugular, guttural tones, have their adherents; moreover, numberless tendencies (inherited and acquired) pre-

disposing men to be broad or narrow in character, affect their senses (including the sense of hearing) as well as their critical faculty; and accordingly there are many and various opinions as to what kind of tone is right.[1] *Diversos, diversa juvant.*

Apparently, this diversity of "taste" in tone must account for the existence of the different schools of breathing. The point of view is everything; but most of us are agreed on one or two points. A large loud tone of rapid growth is most acceptable; so also is an organ of tearful and phrenetic quality, which spreads a mist of hypnotic "loveliness" over our reasoning faculties. Vocal "power" and "charm" carry us all away. The reader started at our use of the word "hypnotic" in reference to voice. The truth is that few realise what immense hypnotic power the human voice has.[2]

There once lived abroad, ever so long ago, a lady vocalist who was said to be, in her own way, "incomparable." All came under her spell, but her witchery was "powerless" outside of her own "narrow" *métier*. "Vocally agile" though she was—and "plastic," her repertoire was limited; she evidently knew

[1] We are compelled to deal with the subject of tone in our chapter on breathing, because the subjects are really inseparable. Cf. Chap. IX., p. 1.

[2] Before making any unfounded charge, and accusing the writer of wishing to do away with real charm and instinctive beauty of voice, the good reader will suspend judgment. The contention which it is desired to insist on is, that to "charm" and instinct something else must be added, so that we may finally rejoice over a new amalgam.

nothing of universality, though "loveliness" of expression and of tone were hers—pre-eminently; but the "tone would not respond to all kinds of music —to sacred as well as to secular, nor to songs in general." She could not have sung Wagner-music, we imagine. Another lady of unquestionable "vocal" talent—if one may trust the records in these two cases—and "trained *usque ad unguem* in operatic coloratur," once, it is said, attempted a coloratur aria by Handel at a great musical gathering. The old *bel-cantist* "baffled her completely;" she could not sing the *divisions*, for "her method was stiff," and she suffered accordingly; Handel's music has a way of its own with recalcitrant *prime donne*, even as Handel himself had. Both these ladies could apparently invest their work with their own decorative charm; but they were the *slaves* of that charm, and, what is bewailed as being of greater import by the gnarled old critic whose words we have quoted, so was the world! Slavery has been adjudged inadmissible in civilised countries. Nevertheless, the two ladies of whom we have written above, enslaved the world of their day. No stronger proof is necessary as to what manner of tone and breathing the world would consider to be right. Pretty, sensuous tone is, in public opinion, an unanswerable argument, and so, in professional circles, is the kind of breathing which produces it. Nevertheless the student, though he gladly acknowledge the fascination of "lovely" tone, cannot discard progressiveness for loveliness; true, just tone for "beauty;" the universal for the par-

ticular; and *constitutional* for local breathing. It was said, these ladies' tone and breathing was "right for them;" we are not concerned to deny it—perhaps it was. *The trouble is, however, that people desire to prove, from the public success of artists such as these, that their tone and breathing are right for everybody else; and that they are, moreover, the only admissible ones.*

Such men as Sims Reeves and M. Jean de Reszke[1] have, however, not lived in vain; the world is the richer for their lives. Their legacies to all time will be truth and universality of expression. What have these men taught us? They have refused to range themselves on the side of any particular school of singing and breathing, they lived their artistic lives not by the senses alone, in spite of the fact that they had vocal idiosyncrasies inseparable from their style and physical constitutions. Nothing in the way of vocal expression came amiss to Sims Reeves; he traversed its whole range, from the airiest comedy to the deepest tragedy, and that with verisimilitude. The lofty-spiritual, the heroic, the tender and emotional, every tone of love, hate, scorn, fear, faith, doubt, prayer, joy, sorrow, came forth from this singer's soul with authority, conviction, and truth. Jean de Reszke has given us like results in Wagner-drama and in opera, his work dealing entirely with romance and mythology. The mastery obtained by these two artists over their voices was of a mental as well as physical character — a fact which affected their

[1] Fortunately M. J. de Reszke is with us yet.

breathing. The tone of voice which most appeals to the dominating principle in men's lives—to the supreme emotion or passion which is their chief characteristic—is the tone which they will pronounce true. Some men are gentle, some forceful, some sensuous, some intellectual; again, one man is of narrow vision, another broadly sympathetic, one small-minded, another generous, one a pretentious *poseur*, another a lover of things as they are, who seeks for "bed-rock truth." Diversity of opinion in regard to tone-quality, as we have already said, indicates diversity of character, and this diversity obtains until the man of genius sweeps away all prejudice by the whirlwind of his power, and wakes in the public breast the elemental greatness which belongs to humanity in virtue of the rock whence it was hewn. They who study the technique of singing will accept those bodily conditions as correct which produce the tones they most admire. We have, accordingly, many schools of breathing.

The progressive student will adopt only that kind of breathing which gives him *universal tone*, *i.e.*, such a tone as will serve for all characterisation. One kind of tone, fixed and unchangeable, however sensuously beautiful it may be, will not satisfy him. Experience has taught the world that the really *sane* man is he whose hereditary and acquired forces, physical and psychical, have worked harmoniously so as to produce balance of character, which balanced state of mind enables him to make harmonious comments upon the pregnant situations of life. So in art:

the verdict of experience is in favour of that man who through perfect balance of parts, physical and psychic, produces a harmoniously sane tone, with which he can make true, musical pronouncements upon any musical and dramatic situation that may present itself to him. A "beautiful" voice undeniably produces hypnotisation, and excites frenzy; but the singer who wants to be a factor in national progress cannot satisfy himself by playing Svengali.

Tone is an index to character; the thoughtful singer will therefore set about putting up a high standard for himself; and will seek such methods as will enable him to realise that standard. *Breathing is an integral part* of the true method of tone production; indeed it may be said, in one sense, to be the root of the matter. Any kind of breath, the weight of which is unduly felt at any given part of the body, is apt to produce a tone which betrays the secret as to what part of the body is being unduly affected by the breathing. The tone will be inelastic, and unfit for instant, varied, and universal expression. All limitation of the breathing function produces a corresponding degree of limitation and localisation of tone. Mental adaptability and physical elasticity underlie the vocal powers of Jean de Reszke, as they did those of Sims Reeves. The result in both cases was universality of tone. The whole subject of tone is so ethereal, and that of breathing so polemical, that one is glad to have a definite case of achievement to point to. The two great artists to whom we have repeatedly alluded have accomplished a definite result,

and have not been fettered vocally, while their outlook has been large and comprehensive, and their bodily aspects clearly indicative of *constitutional, and not of local, breathing*. Their faces expressed alert receptivity, expansiveness, and relaxation, and were not disfigured by any one kind of sentiment, emotion, or thought. Meeting either you would say, "There goes a man and an artist." Their necks, throats, chests, were not suggestive of those of pouter pigeons; and their attitude on the stage was free, easy, and unconstrained. They showed no rigidity, no embarrassment, at any point, when they breathed. M. Jean de Reszke favoured the present writer by allowing him to make a rapid study of his breathing, while he sang. He did not give one the idea that his efforts brought him near to apoplexy; nor did his facial colour resemble that of a peony. He breathed *upward* and constitutionally. He was mentally active too; his soul was in his work and his soul "went everywhere." [1] He even sang, in private, a "patter" song (of the *café chantant* sort) in answer to a remark made by the writer, to the effect that a great artist must sing a comic song as well as Mr. Albert Chevalier, and music-drama as well as Jean de Reszke. Everything singable must be sung (not necessarily in public).

Now this kind of singing is impossible if any breath be allowed to escape—unconverted into tone. *Bel-cantists'* test (as the reader knows) of a good breath and of good singing was to hold a lighted

[1] Browning's "My Last Duchess."

taper in front of the lips during the performance.[1] If the taper flickered, the breath and the singing were pronounced bad. The face must always wear a singing look, and the look must be of the same character as the tone—must say the same thing. This can never be if the breathing be rigid; a rigid posture and rigid breathing can convey nothing but rigidity. "Stand at ease" is the word of command. *From the mind* must start the impulse which results in the perfect union of the look on the face, of gesture (in acting), and of the tone of voice—all three making one expression. For it has been made abundantly clear that the singer's breath is an act of volition—a voluntary act, which becomes, finally, an unconscious one.

Allusion has already been made to various "schools" of breathing; these produce: one, a *thick*, another, a *thin* tone; one, a *forward*, another, a *guttural* tone. How are we to find such a method of breathing (and such a tone) as will enable us to best express art-thought, to art-lovers? The artist must not *descend*, he (and his hearers with him) must *ascend*. Clearly, the only way to provide ourselves with a good singing breath, is to realise the physical conditions which have been described at length in this chapter; *i.e.*, to breathe deeply and *control* deeply with the whole body from below upward; and then to judge of the correctness of our own breath according as we are able to say, "I love," "I hate," "I pray," "I believe," "I pity," "I be-

[1] In school, of course.

seech," "I defy," etc.—*with*, in each case, appropriate tone, and *without* deliberately altering the pose of the throat or the form and character of the words.

Breathing is the main secret of linguistic purity; and this implies expansive tone, capable of being characteristically coloured, direct from the brain. It has been said that there is no such thing as a true standard of tone.[1] But surely this is not so. Even in pianofortes there is tone, which one may call "good," or "bad." Every pianoforte maker, as such, has his characteristics, dependent (no doubt) upon material and workmanship; just as violins vary according to make, material, and varnish. But all pianofortes must possess characteristic expansiveness (varying in degree perhaps), else the tone is bad. We hear it often said that pianofortes (when good) possess a *singing* tone. This is what we mean by expansiveness, and this surely is tone which lends itself to all kinds of expression, grave and gay. Right breathing will prove it *is* right, by producing expansive tone, which lends itself to versatile expression. The models who supplied us with reliable examples in this chapter, breathed deeply, constitutionally; being neither prodigal nor niggardly in inspiration or expiration. The eyes and face were at one with the voice, the pose of the figure was congruous; *i.e.*, the voice did not say one thing and the figure another. The pose was truthful, striking, graceful, mobile, and agile, as is ever the case with the artist, in dancing, riding, fencing, or singing.[1]

[1] See p. 258.

Such then is our counsel to the student. He must ever remember that the body depends on the mind for its inspiration—in *both* senses. He must breathe easily, generously, and he must say what he finds he wants to say, whether as singer or actor. If he cannot fully express himself, as poetic-elocutionist, vocal-painter, or musician, endowed with the seer's gift (provided of course he has something to say), there is something wrong with his breathing. Very probably he is breathing too much. It is not the amount of breath a man *takes* that tells, it is the amount he *controls*. If, after absorbing the spirit of the text, he finds he cannot reproduce that spirit, let him look to his breathing. There may be different opinions regarding tone-quality; but on the point we have just been discussing there can be but one. The singer, having acquired a natural system of breathing, in the constitutional sense, will ask himself a few questions: (*a.*) Can I sustain my tone firmly? (*b.*) Can I give full value to vowels? (*c.*) Can I "musicalise" consonants? (*d.*) Can I pronounce justly and intelligently, as I do when I speak with sustained breath? (*e.*) Can I show clearly whether I am a prophet, a soldier, a lover, or a cobbler (who may be all three), when I sing the rôles which deal with these characters severally? If the answer be "yes," his breathing is correct. The quality of his tone will depend upon that of his mind—his soul, and not merely upon physical considerations.

Irresistibly we are drawn to the conclusion that *right breathing can only be judged by right tone;* and

that right tone can only be judged by the summum bonum of the singer, viz., *pronunciation—pure, truthful pronunciation*,[1] *in every part of the voice, high or low. The word, with its atmosphere, is the test.* Pronounce with refinement, with the quick wit of rational and imaginative beings, and your tone will be right. Breathe so that you pronounce rightly, and you breathe rightly. But, if you breathe so that you must "vocalise"—in the narrow and pedantic sense—you breathe wrongly. When you convey the impression that the words you sing are those of the character you represent, when mood and atmosphere are characterful, you must be breathing correctly. *Respiration depends upon thought—to a very large extent.* Once the truly natural, normal breathing, described physiologically in this chapter, has been acquired, a singer's equipment is merely a matter of brains, surroundings, and development. "Ah," "Eh," "Ih," etc., *coloratur* and *cantilene* are easily dealt with. Sympathy, and the legitimate pressing-out, which conveys the human element to the voice, relieving it of the "whiteness" which is the bane of modern singing, will reward the patient and intelligent student.

Singers suffer tortures from *nervousness*. The best and only cure for this malady is a good deep breath, well and deeply controlled. It enables one to collect one's thoughts; and the very first thing a serious singer does, when he has called his thoughts home, is to empty himself of himself, and put the

[1] N.B.—*Not* so-called "singing" or "vocalised" pronunciation.

thought of his work in place of the selfish fear which possessed him. To cure nervousness, or selfish fear, put something in its place! Occupy yourself with the scene you are about to depict, and "nervousness" will flee away as do mists before the sun.[1] If the nervous attack be a very bad one, make a still more determined effort to evict *self* and to secure a new tenant. "*As thy day, so shall thy strength be.*"

[1] See p. 87.

CHAPTER IX

TONE

Tone and experimental physics.—Necessity and inventiveness, theory and practice.—Birth of tone, tone and speech.—Thoughts and words.—Growth of language.—Efficient use of language and tone.—Ordinary and trained utterance and singing tone.—Character of the *word* the *safeguard and test of tone*.—Mind the voice-producer, not the senses.—Lack of education (as to the value of words) fatal to voice.—Teaching and producing.—Good singer concentrates on words not on tones.—Fine tone the result of fine pronunciation.—Elocution.—Pronunciation.—What is it?—Sims Reeves's pronunciation, and Mendelssohn's "Elijah."—An interesting point.—Characterisation on poetic-musical lines.—Forcing the situation and the voice.—Differentation.—Tone and pronunciation once more.—Test-case.—Elijah a *prophet*.—Man's alleged two voices.—Physics and Ethics.—Children's training.—Singing and speaking.—The late Sir John Stainer and the late Canon Liddon.—Loud voices at clubs and restaurants.—The fundamental principle, language the fount of music (relative) and of tone.

In dealing with the subject of respiration in the last chapter, some anticipatory remarks were made regarding tone: they were unavoidable.[1] Experiments, not a few, have been made in regard to tone and sound; and strong, faithful work naturally commands respect. Still, false conditions often stultify the most elaborate schemes, rendering true results impossible. The science of physics makes rapid,

[1] Cf. Chap. VIII., p. 105.

sweeping changes; so that it seems wise to build upon the two facts known to us as Evolution and the Growth of Language.[1] Human, and mechanically produced tones, are two different things. All great vocal results have been secured on natural and fundamental lines. Necessity has stimulated inventiveness, and without much anatomical knowledge as to the length of the human or ovine trachea, singers have known (in part) what they wanted, and have (in part) secured it. Theory is good, practice is better. Adding his mite to the general knowledge, the writer—all through this volume—gives his experience as a singer; he endeavours to analyse the vocal art of great performers with whom he has come in contact, and to show its influence upon his own. All his theories are therefore inseparably connected with practice.

One day, following a "fox to earth," he made, he thinks, a little discovery. *Man can make no personal and available musical sound without the medium of a vowel, to which a consonant may, or may not be added, according to the nature of the sound.*[2] This is a significant and, as some friendly observers say, a heretofore undiscussed fact in regard to singing. A violin-tone, on the other hand, is in the first degree the result of a purely mechanical act. An automaton could produce the tone: an instrument of wood (gen-

[1] For the writer's argument it is enough that this phrase should suggest the purpose which common-sense will see in that growth.

[2] A humming or a buzzing sound is not available for the art of song, nor for articulate speech.

erally), a tense string, a bow and an arm to wield it, and there is the tone—*in posse*.

Human tone is indissolubly allied to speech.[1] *We can make no tone which will not be simultaneously a word or a part of one.* The making of the tone makes the word, or a part of it; but the word, or a part of it, is the immediate cause of making the tone; and, as the tone was evolved for the sake of the word, that word may therefore be said to be the important factor. A similar argument though not complete in every detail holds good in regard to thoughts and words. We can have no definite thoughts without words, though we can have words without thoughts, and, indeed, frequently do. There must be some medium; a musician's "thought" *e.g.*, is formulated and conveyed by means of notes. Notes were invented for the sake of musical "thought,"[2] just as words were invented, slowly, for the sake of—let us say—linguistic thought. It is thought therefore that takes precedence, being the important factor.

The chain then is: 1, Thought; 2, Word; 3, Tone. Now, 1 (Thought), and 3 (Tone) must be in-

[1] This statement must not be wrested from its context and forced to mean that the making of a musical vocal tone, *ipso facto*, forms intelligible speech. Whatever may be the truth concerning the *immediate* purpose of the evolution of tone, there can be no doubt, in the light of the design, revealed by the ethical process and social life, that its *ultimate* purpose is the communication of thought.

[2] If anyone cavils at our use of the word "thought" in connection with musical expression, and prefers the word "emotion" or "feeling," we have no objection to offer. "Thought" to us in this connection connotes a mental state.

timately connected—there must be complete fusion, and 3 (Tone) must reflect 1 (Thought) or be adjudged imperfect and insignificant. There would be no such thing as a human tone, were it not for mental activity and the formulating of ideas consequent upon it. Man being gregarious, tone becomes the medium of intelligent intercommunication, of thought-exchange. But a thought in its purity cannot reveal itself without a pure medium; therefore, if the tone is to do its work properly, it must give the whole of the thought which is in the word, together with its atmosphere. This it does when it gives *the word as it is*. The mind conceives an emotional thought which seeks an outlet in utterance; the result is voice, pure and simple—at first, the superficial, clavicular, sternal, or laryngeal utterance, characteristic of a large portion of humanity. Vocal efficiency depends on mental efficiency;[1] the character of mind is accordingly of supreme importance to that of tone.

The method which some of us have found useful in converting this superficial utterance into a singing voice has been already discussed, the method being compact of mental and physical discipline. Forces are called in for this purpose, which are not used in ordinary speech. A speaking voice, properly trained, would naturally make a better singing voice than an ordinary speaking voice.

[1] Jugular, laryngeal,—all local expression has its seat in the brain. Some congenital or post-genital fault or blemish is the cause of it.

The mind then is the starting-point, holding within it an emotional thought, which seeks an outlet. For the purpose of, and while manifesting this thought, *the mind makes a sound;* but, as the mental concept is the chief thing, it follows that we must so govern tonal vibrations and inflexions, that the thing expressed (when the mind makes a sound), is the thought in present possession of that mind, and nothing else—*i.e.*, there must be no foreign matter. Voice, tone, sound, exist for this purpose, in speech (disciplined or undisciplined) and in song. It is for the singer to discover exactly what disposition of the human frame will enable him to secure such a pronunciation of the word as will make that word the articulate expression of the mental concept it stands for. *The character of the word, accordingly, and not that of the tone—per se—is the safeguard.* And as the word is but the thought, made audible, and the thought is but the mind or a part of it, crystallised into form, it follows that *mind, not the senses, must be regarded as the voice-trainer.* Ill-educated coarseness can neither teach nor produce tone. Fine mind produces fine[1] pronunciation, and voice must needs follow—with discipline and technique. Voice training is complicated by using fanciful "voice builders." Jargon and gibberish are not "thoughtful." Rather let a man project his mind (a very small portion of it at a time) through the medium of the uttered word—

[1] *Fine* in the sense that it is suitable for use in the *Fine-Arts*, not in the sense of "fine and large." A voice may be sensuously fine and large, and still be useless in the Fine-Arts.

let him say what he wants to say musically and poetically, lyrically or dramatically, and with linguistic purity—and his voice must be of the fine and right kind.

A student's aim should be to sing a word, rather than to make a tone.[1] Fine pronunciation is the inevitable result of proper mental and bodily discipline, and fine tone the inseparable companion of fine pronunciation. Elocution (on right lines) and tone are simultaneous studies. The writer struggled with the disadvantages of a throaty tenor and a guttural bass (he sang both), but he never enjoyed the privilege of being taught elocution. He had an ideal—(it grew slowly, and is not yet of full age)—which came in part from his observation of those who had "*thought*" themselves into a state of true and just expression. No stilted, labial, dental, or laryngeal mannerism can possibly produce anything like the unconscious art which marks the real elocutionist. Under the guidance of mind, therefore, we study, so as to utter justly the thoughts (original and otherwise) which pass through the mind;—as we study, our power over singing and fine pronunciation grows. *The "colour" of correctly*[2] *spoken, and the "sustained rhythm" of sung, words, constitute the whole of the vocal art.*

What constitutes pronunciation? It is not the mere physical act of forming the vowels and conso-

[1] We have attempted in the foregoing chapter to explain the process of making the body obey the mind—in matters of expression.

[2] *I.e.*, spoken with atmosphere.

nants that go to make the word; rather let us call it the *saying of the unified, mental thing*, which comes into vocal existence, when the vowels and consonants—the verbal representatives of that thing—are uttered. The student first *thinks* the word clearly, and listens to it with his inner ear; when the mind has sounded it, he says it calmly with his voice. *This is the finest singing lesson a man can have.* Those who remember Sims Reeves remember his manner of utterance. His whole face, his whole being, pronounced the words; he used his imaginative reason, and, as an artist, reigned supreme. His mind saw all it could see (and this was much) in every character. *Fine pronunciation will ever depend upon that.* The great tenor realised *e.g.*, "Samson's" (a strong man's) blindness, so that when he reached his climax in the words "Sun, moon, and stars, all dark to me," there was a horror of darkness about his pronunciation, which lives yet, somewhere, in this most laryngeal world of ours. Here was an example of what a singer can do, in the way of projected realism. Then again, his "Tom Tug" (pronounced with the racy light-heartedness which made the character live and move) and his "Tom Bowling" (with its strong pathos and its touch of spirituality), together with "Come into the garden, Maud" (which he sang as one who meant to be an irresistible lover): *all* these rôles show the influence of the seeing mind over the responsive body.

It is true that Sims Reeves,[1] with his strong phy-

[1] Through the evolution of language. See pp. 26, 27.

sique, his great column of a throat (from which he loosely shook his voice), and his massive frame, was specially endowed—physically. But it was his mind that made him. Some years ago his first words to the writer, who had sought his aid in regard to the singing of "Elijah," were "What do you think about the Prophet—what sort of man was he?" No word of thoracic, crico-thyroideal or epiglottic matters! After a little discussion, however, concerning the spiritual significance of the rôle, the writer piped his little attempt at expressing the Prophet's music in the duet in Part I. Gently considerate, the great tenor said, "I think I would sing it like this." Then —floating himself, so to speak, into an easy attitude, he simply *said*, *sustainedly*,[1] "Turn unto her, O Lord my God!" as he imagined the Prophet would have said the words; nor would the Prophet (one may be forgiven for the opinion) have seriously objected to the presentation—it was "prophetic!"

An interesting point for vocalists may be given here, which Sims Reeves communicated to the writer. He showed how the control of breath gave the impression of the uninterrupted line, *even when the actual tone was discontinued* so as to take a comma into consideration. This is a subtle and delicate vocal-principle which disposes of the contention of those who maintain that Sims Reeves's singing was always "full of holes," *i.e.*, was essentially disjointed. Such it could never have been, for he controlled his breath

[1] Yes! the melody was controlled on the breath, though he half whispered the words in later years.

all through, his face sustaining the interest, and his breath sustaining also, while he made the comma. The moral of all this is, that the *saying of the words with special reference to the character portrayed, is essential.* The whole man must utter the text; the mind first thinks, then says it,—the throat obeying the mind's message and contentedly becoming a channel for clear, atmospheric utterance. Students will indeed be careful to make it appear that the characters they portray knew their grammar, prosody, and punctuation; and that they were keenly alive to the necessity of preserving their musical and poetic instincts[1] free from violation. *They must never force the situation, and in that case, they will never force their voice.*

Characters must be differentiated. A tenor, *e.g.*, makes a grave error when he converts "Obadiah's" music in "Elijah" into a conventionally lyric, love-sick, methodist wail. The true tenor's man will be a prophet's servant and protector, possessed of clear vision. Moreover no artistically sane baritone ever bellows "Was duftet doch der Flieder," as a vocalist (of high degree in a decadent age) once did, in an important city. The influence of Hans Sachs's poetry ("Die Meistersinger") and the soft-falling mantle of night will cause him to *sigh out* his opening phrases in this great monologue. *Side by side therefore, fine tone and fine pronunciation will grow as the result of fine mind, directing fine body.* Tone-production and articulation go hand in hand; for, without ar-

[1] See p. 126.

ticulation (and its primal cause) there would have been no such thing as human tone. If any one dissent violently from the above underlined proposition, let him take any word (as a test), or any phrase. And first, let us take an easy breath, deep as a sigh of deep content. Control the breath in the same place as it was felt when first sighed and afterward inhaled. Now whisper the word, non-hissingly; then sing (whisper converted into tone); and again whisper non-hissingly. All this on one breath, without hurry, but also without waste of time.[1] If the word (its real meaning) sound fairly convincing, the tone, though comparatively subdued, will be fairly correct even in the case of a novice. Let an ordinary student however, after singing the word, *speak* it immediately (*without taking a fresh breath*), *leaving the throat as it was while he sang*, and he will find how utterly the values are changed.[2] The word will sound quite different to what it would be under right conditions. Most people think they can say or sing "Ah" so that there is nothing but "ah" in it, and that therefore all that "ah" implies (when spoken with intention) is in it. But can they? In all the cases which have come under the writer's notice professionally, the tone is meaningless and white, for it is invariably obtained by sacrificing the essential qualities of the spoken

[1] Otherwise the exercise becomes too long and heavy.

[2] It is not true that "a man cannot hear himself sing." He *may*, *possibly*, not get the full effect of the "tone," but he can, at any rate, hear enough to show him whether he is making nonsensical noises or no. If he sing sensibly, he will sing rightly. His brain is the judge.

word (spoken, *i.e.*, under natural and artistic conditions). Let an untrained baritone sing the words "As God the Lord of Israel liveth,[1]" etc., and then without taking fresh breath, *say* the words he has just sung, with the same jugular contortion, and clavicular upheaval, and he will find some food for reflection. It will prove his articulation to be fictitious and insincere, and his prophet a "harmonious blacksmith."

Much has been written concerning man's *two voices*, the singing and the speaking. Man has but one; two he does not need. Pronouncements such as the following are a little pathetic. "Voice . . . is to be distinguished from speech, which is the production of sounds intended to express ideas (*sic*). Many of the lower animals have voice, but none have the power of speech in the sense in which man possesses that faculty. There may be speech without voice, as in whispering, while in singing a scale of musical tones we have voice without speech."[2] Confusion arises if we do not insist clearly upon the difference between physics and ethics. "What is," is not always "What ought to be." Children are allowed to grow up without due regard for proper breathing and speaking. Breathing should be cultivated, just as much as any other activity; nature gives the cue, it is ours to follow it up.[3] Children's training should include principles which not only

[1] The opening phrase in Mendelssohn's "Elijah."
[2] Cf. p. 115.
[3] Cf. p. 96.

govern the voice, mentally and physically, but which also promote health. Home influences are plainly discernible in children, whose quick imitative faculties cause them to copy the vocal and linguistic faults of their elders. If truly normal breathing were cultivated, and clear enunciation fostered, there would be less nonsense talked about the divisibility of the voice into two kinds. Further, if the experiment here suggested were made in our schools; if children were taught proper respiration and due control of breath by means of sustained thought, so to speak; and were moreover trained to secure a focus for thought through its concentration in words (pure thoughts in pure words),[1] our contention could not fail to be generally accepted.

You have only to observe New York and London boys at play, and you will hear distinctly the results of an imperfect system of breathing and speaking. Singing and speaking are of course different functions; but speaking affects singing, though the two be not synonymous. Speaking, reading, and declamation are however integral factors of singing, and our contention is, that while we are put off with a sound which is merely *suggestive* of the word in ordinary, and even in public speech, we shall never have general efficiency in our public speakers and singers. We understand each other only *by the general effect* of the sound of the words, and our vocabulary is not a very large one; difficulty of understanding ensues instantly when a rarely used word is

[1] Pure not only in meaning, but in form also.

employed, and we accordingly find it hard to grasp quickly what the strange word is.

The best and most effective speakers and preachers have always been those who *sustained* their tone (not in sing-song fashion, however). They gave a sustainedly vocal character to their speech, without any droning, but also without jerkily popping out their words like so many corks. The words are *floated* out on a current of flowing breath. The late Sir John Stainer informed the writer, years ago, that the late Canon Liddon carried this method to such a pitch, that at times he almost gave the impression that he preached on a melody—so keen was his sense of sustaining. Sir John Stainer also frequently took the Canon's note on the organ, quietly, and found that his reciting note would frequently be the high tenor A and that he would sometimes touch the high C, flowingly and sustainedly. It is a well remembered fact that Canon Liddon was a most easily audible preacher, even in the vast dome of St. Paul's Cathedral. A popular fallacy claims that a manly voice is very deep, loud and guttural. You have heard it on the stage, and sometimes in clubs. It may be very useful for ghosts, and non-comic gravediggers; but it is "monotonous and hollow," nor can it ever produce the thrill of realism. The "deep" tone is always sombre and should be used but sparingly. The middle tones (in pitch) form the best starting-point for the public speaker, intensity being easily secured by a slight elevation in the pitch of, and a slight pressure on the voice. So-called deep,

reverberatory voices, which advertise their possessors by making loud noises in the street and at restaurants (when they are close at hand) *never "carry"* in large halls.

Combining what has been said on general inefficiency in speech and the best way to cure it, and on the cause of eminence in public speakers (*qua* speech), with what has been already set forth in regard to singing and voice production, we pin our faith to the following principle: *As language is the fount of music*[1] *so also is it the fount of tone. The stream must resemble the parent fount in purity. The voice of the future must prove that it grows out of language; and singers must begin their studentship with the singing of thoughts; for thought is the fount of language, and language the fount of tone.*

[1] N.B.—This term must not be made to mean "musical instinct." The reader will also bear in mind that we are dealing with relative music.

CHAPTER X

TONE (Continued)

Singer's tone (poetic, musical, linguistic) dependent on bodily conditions.—The opened-mouth fallacy.—A sigh of contentment a good start for tone-production.—Relaxation and conservation of energy, or (in this case) breath.—Cardinal sounds.—Voice teacher the true "diction-master," corrupt pronunciation, education, faith, humour, *i.e.*, good-humour.—Shortest road to enduring, useful, tone *via* good pronunciation.—Resonance.—Sensational *versus* linguistic tone.—Volume of tone.—Growth of song.—*Ore rotundo versus* the parallelogram-mouth.—Sustained breath means sustained tone, and sustained thought means both.—Composers and fancied ignorance concerning vocal art.—Special endowments.—Special results.—Strong singing instinct the cause of voice.—A "voiceless" (rê singing) man, test case.—M. Jean de Reszke.—"Sing as you talk."—Civilisation and rigidity.—Speaking and singing once more.—Sore throat.—Singing under adverse conditions.

A SINGER who is, at bottom, a combination of poet and musician, will produce only poetic and musical tone. This statement bears repetition. It is a poor compliment to poetry to say that it can be served by any save musical tone. A musical (human) tone is produced without trickery, and flows easily and spontaneously out of the situation and the words.[1] It may not be cloying in its "pleasantness"; but, it will be truthful, and truth is ever "pleasant"—to the

[1] See p. 121.

truthful. In order that he may produce such tone, the student must have a musical and a poetic disposition, trained to instrumental and linguistic accuracy; and in addition, the upper part of the trunk (from the base of the thorax upward, including the throat—back and front—and the jaw, etc.), must be unrigid. This condition depends upon control of breath by the diaphragm, acting in unconscious freedom, and buttressed (so to speak) by the co-ordinate action of the whole muscular system from the feet upward. Discipline the whole muscular system by means of the mind,[1] and you can bring it all into a state of co-ordinate activity. In order that he may produce a musical vocal sound, through which *a thought-inside-a-word* is projected (without losing its character by the way), the singer causes the whole muscular system from below upward [2] to act co-ordinately with the inspiratory and expiratory muscles, on the diaphragm.[3] This muscle forms a firm base for the lungs, into which breath flows in sufficient quantity for the purpose of respiratory expression. The singer will prevent the breath escaping without paying toll, by means of the diaphragm (practice will render its work unconscious and automatic); he will further imagine, *think* "the tone" (or rather "the word"), until he hear it distinctly in

[1] Those who have seen Mr. Sandow make his muscles dance (to the delight of public audiences) know that this is possible.

[2] We read a chord of music from below, upward, and in building an edifice we generally begin at the foundation.

[3] Cf. p. 96.

his mental ear; then choosing the easiest and most natural sound, "Ah" (it is the easiest if one breathe correctly), he will pronounce it limpidly—the whole body and mind taking part in the task of expressing a thoughtful emotion.

When about to sing, it is an error to open the mouth and to drop the lower jaw by a separate act of volition, preparatory to emitting sound. The mouth will be opened sufficiently and efficiently (and the throat also), *ipso facto*, by the saying of "Ah." The sung note or pronounced syllable will thus be a mental expression, *i.e.*, an expression of co-ordinate mind by means of co-ordinate body,[1] which body helps to produce voice in the manner we have endeavoured to indicate. *All this, provided the breath has not escaped, not otherwise.* The normal sign of normal weariness or contentment is the sigh, common to animals and man. We are only concerned at present with the human species. The sigh will be as deep as the weariness or the contentment. For our purpose we choose the sigh of contentment—normal and rational. This is easily expressed by some such sound as "Ah"; and it is some such rational expression as this which is the basis of all human vocal-sound, as it is the very "alpha" and "omega" of all true singing. The normal student will make it a long-drawn sigh and will build on contentment. Optimism is better than pessimism; evil must succumb to good, in the long run. By a simple effort of mind, any one can turn such an "Ah" into the expression of a mood, and can exemplify, in one half-

whispered word, a whole life-time of emotion. The student can use this expression for long phrases, even for long exercises, when he has made some progress in his studies.[1] *This is what one may call informing technique with mind. Conservation and Relaxation*[2] are the singer's two great principles. Everything is contained in them. Relaxation implies faith and the absence of fear, and Conservation implies balance and bringing to a focus.

We have just suggested an experiment with "Ah[3]." Lest we should be misunderstood, let it be said at once, that, as language is an agglomeration of many sounds, it is manifestly unwise to use any *one* sound for the purpose of "voice building"—to the exclusion of other sounds. Man can make no tone[4] without articulation, and the *raison d'ĕtre* of tone is the supplying of means for intelligent inter-communication. So much we have seen. In the singer's[5] case the communication is musical as well as intelligent, and he requires all sounds in their purity. Force the mechanism to make *one* sound for a lengthy period, as we have already said, and it will presently be a difficult matter for it (once it has become fixed and accustomed to *one* sound) to make other sounds easily. It therefore seems unwise to confine the stu-

[1] See below—rē cardinal sounds.
[2] See p. 58, "Relaxation."
[3] See below—rē cardinal sounds.
[4] By this is meant eloquent tone. Humming and buzzing are not eloquent.
[5] Speaker's also.

dent's attention to one syllable, or even to give it undue prominence, seeing that the student can—from the very start, if his breathing be correct and larynx unrigid—practise all vowels and consonants. In this manner, diction and vocalisation become simultaneous studies, as we have already observed; whereas if one "voice builder" such as "Ah" or "Eh" be exclusively used to form or produce the voice, the character of the tone must suffer, and diction become a separate study. It must be confusing to the average vocal-student to go to a diction-master during his period of learning "voice-production"; for we are assured by prominent authorities that the voice-teacher employs necessarily a *broader* vowel than the diction-master must use in the pupil's training. This is one of the mysteries of modern "voice-production." [1] *All cardinal sounds should be exercised by the vocal teacher, at every lesson.* In the last analysis, the musical and artistic value of utterance will depend upon the manner in which the air-waves which become sound, generated by vibration in the body, issue forth in musicalised speech. The *quality* of the tone will depend in the main on the mode of pronunciation and articulation.

Corrupt pronunciation is an artistic evil, the magnitude of which is well-nigh inconceivable. There exists an appalling amount of insensibility as to how a word should really sound when correctly spoken or sung. Words are accordingly minced or mouthed, so that their character suffers. Modern capacity for in-

[1] See page 22, "Phonetics of song and speech—vocalising," etc.

capacity is wonderful. A slovenly, drawling, lisping, slobbering, snuffling, gurgling, tone in speech (as Wagner described it) is constantly noticeable; and the atmosphere created by such a tone, is utterly foreign to the keen, bell-like and clear specimen which carries its message direct to heart and brain. An orator's power lies in his sensitiveness to that kind of eloquence which is free from the admixture of all sound foreign to the word itself; and which is limpid, clear, and pure in its flow. Whatever power onomatopœia possesses in language is lost, when the value of pure vowels and consonants is disregarded.

Sunshine and laughter are essentials in all healthy life, and no healthy clear tone can exist without them; they lend to it a *musical* character, which it would otherwise lack. In proportion as man grows, with the spread of elevating thought, the singer's mission will gradually assert itself; and vocal-art will ultimately imply the possession of creative intellect, as well as the exercise of sensuous charm. The exhibition of a *tour-de-force*, and the arousing of emotion by means of emotion may be legitimate enough, but the end is not yet. Let faith in the triumph of good over evil work its way into singers' minds and souls, and we shall have some singing to which it will be worth our while to listen. But the means whereby this result can be obtained must be at hand, and every unwarped intellect must necessarily use a pure medium of communication.

The quickest way to fine tone is via fine pronunciation. The way in which vowel melts into vowel, and

consonants float into their places, determines the character of the tone, largely; nay, it may be said to constitute the tone, which results in articulate, musical, sustained, song or speech. In singing a vowel on a long note, the act of prolonging the vowel sound, which forms the integral part of the word, does not alter the character of the word. That word remains essentially the same, when sung, as it is when spoken or recited. The fused sound of the vowels, forming the core of the word, which vowels form a unit, is the real core of that word; and that is the same whether the sound be long or short in duration. Any additional sound, any increase in tone-volume, which one can make while pronouncing the unified thing forming the word or syllable, is legitimate. The tone, which reverberates automatically and unconsciously in the laryngeal, buccal, and nasal cavities, in consequence of the pressure of controlled breath upon the vocal chords, will be just as big and loud as one's body can produce; and this is all that is necessary. The moment, however, the quantity or size of tone interferes with and clouds the clear-cut character of the words, *that moment the singer interferes with a fundamental principle of music—pronunciation; and the flood-gates of fictitious expression and sentimentality are opened.* Because a singer once blared himself into wealth, by means of colossal physical strength and the trick of bringing the voice to a *focus* in the head cavities, *that* is no reason why we should follow his physical lead; and because another singer may by brute force and disposition *dispose* of com-

petitors for a while (in a generation which has had its ears spoiled by noise), *that* surely is no reason why we should all immediately join a circus, and emulate "the terrible Greek" or "Turk."

Phrenetic excitement does not make for art; mankind's verdict is that sensationalism is destructive. Sensationalism creeps in, when the formful control, which pure language alone can exercise, is cast to the winds; and when *anything* in the shape of a word does duty for the pure medium, which is inseparable from rational speech. On the other hand, when the sung-word corresponds to the *regenerate* spoken-word; and when the central point of the word as well as its circumference are present in pronunciation; when, in brief, the unified musical tone fully reproduces the thought which emanates as the word is spoken,[1] then fictitious expression and sentimentality are impossible. There can only issue at first hand the expression of mind.

A prominent vocalist once assured the writer, at the beginning of his career that "it is impossible to say the same thing in singing as you do in speaking." In other words "A man cannot sing as naturally as he talks," or "singing pronunciation differs from that of ordinary (pure) or of elocutionary speech." This opinion caused much pain at the time, but later was found to be incorrect; it is feeble to rely on the hypnotising character of voice for the purpose of hiding the fatal defects of impure pronunciation; and it is worse to acquiesce in a method of singing, which in-

[1] Spoken *i.e.*, with disciplined regard to the actual meaning.

fallibly stunts the singer's growth. We may perhaps venture, at this point, to sketch a singer's progress—how he goes from strength to strength:—

A POET, for instance, sees the orderliness, the compensating balance, or the fitness of things in the Universe; this moves him to make appropriate comment thereon; the result is a poem.

A MUSICIAN reads the poem, appreciates its structure and its matter, and makes his comment, after his kind, on what the poet has seen; he feels the effect the vision had upon the poet in the first instance, and reflects its influence, viz., that of the poetry. The musician builds his structure with notes, which are his words; these he forms into phrases, just as the poet forms words into poetic ones. There ensues a musician's poem. Every good piece of music is that.

A SINGER in whom Spring's song-instinct stirs, sees and appreciates the structure of the poet and the musician, and reproduces it in voice. He erects his edifice by means of thought, words, and melody, before the mind's eye, through the senses. The singer is therefore a reproducer of a twice-erected structure, and this is his song. But no man builds without leaving a part of himself in the building; the musician accordingly adds something to the original poem, and the singer something to the original poem and music,[1] although he reverences both, and on that account never alters the form of a word or of a phrase. Nay, that which he adds he does not set out to add—he does it unconsciously. The poet sees and

[1] Nothing of a nature foreign to that of poet and musician.

speaks, the composer hears and translates into musical language, while the singer reads and absorbs the original and the translation, and reproduces them by means of appropriate voice. All vocal-students will, therefore, see that their pronunciation and thought must be correlative to each other, and to the poet's and musician's. Having walked with the poet through his garden, and wandered on to the musician's paradise, where bloom, in beauty of form, colour, and perfume, the flowers he has transplanted thither, the singer picks his posy and presents it to those who love the precious things (precious and costly) with all the grace of tender thought his gift will lend to his own face and voice. Very loyal and very true is he, adding all there is to add, with body and with mind, unto, and eliminating from the sung words,[1] and consequently from the tone, all foreign matter whatsoever. Nor will he, in such case, ever become a wanderer without a home.

Elastic, expansive, appropriate, musicalised, sustained *pronouncing* will do more for him and his tone than all the Babel of the Breathing and Voice-producing-Sects can ever do. Perfectly lovely, just, vivid pronunciation will make any method "*teres atque rotundus*" (smooth and round). In our day the "*ore rotundo*" (the round mouth) has degenerated into a parallelogram. Pure pronunciation is within our reach, general culture brings it there, in spite of all charlatanism and sphinxdom. But he who pronounces with the upper, without regard to the lower

[1] *I. e.*, from his own pronunciation of them.

part of the trunk, thereby failing to help lips, tongue, cheek and jaw, *by mentally relating them to the lower part*, vitiates his tone. Embarrassment in saying any word, or in changing from one word to another, communicates embarrassment at once to the tone. Any "musical" person who speaks "musically"[1] and has learnt to recite can learn to sing.—The reciter's characteristics will remain in the singer, but to his reciting will be added singing-power when he shall have learnt to speak his varied thoughts frankly on a sustained diaphragm or breath.[2] *Power of sustained breath means power of sustained tone, which is nothing in the world but sustained thought made audible.* This is not fancy; it is proved fact, proved moreover by the writer's own experience.

Such is the depth to which "hocus pocus" has brought this art of singing, that great composers, men of light and leading feel constrained to tell you frankly "Of course I do not know anything about singing." And yet, singing is an important branch of the musical art. Every man who has intellect and emotion—added to musical knowledge (and the composer possesses all three) knows and ought to know all about singing, if he uses his powers at all, to judge of it. We shall not all suddenly become a Mme. Sembrich or a M. Jean de Reszke: special endowments—special results. But every musical human being, who can hear and talk, can also, with discipline, sing sufficiently well to justify himself in

[1] *I. e.*, with rhythmic, varied intonation.
[2] Constitutional, not local breath.

dealing vocally with the songs of Schubert, Franz and the rest. It is astonishing how a voice will grow at both extremities. Disabilities disappear, and new capabilities come to light. The writer's own voice at first contained just an octave and a fourth,—with always a crack on the highest note. Training has given him just one additional octave.

People who have singing voices are those who have so wished to sing that their desire has overcome the fear of their inability to sing. A beginning is made very early, and voice grows by use. We have never heard of a person starting suddenly to produce great vocal power, without the exercise of previous vocal activity of some kind. Many say they would like to sing "better than anything on earth, you know"; but the desire is not so overwhelming as to force them to try to sing, and, in our day, singing means hard work, and "hard work is such a bore." The result is that comparative atrophy sets in and a possibly useful singer is lost to the world. Many of us would like to be millionaires, but the desire is killed by distaste for the work necessary to produce wealth. *Millionaire—nascitur non fit.* It is really true. The science of money-production manifests itself very early, and so does that of voice-production. *Voice feeds on voice.* All Welsh people sing and have singing voices; everyone is born into a singing atmosphere, and the desire to sing grows; the soul sings, and the body reflects the song, with varying degrees of efficiency. There will always be grades. But the writer's experience emboldens him to say, that all

who have ordinary speaking voices, who know their notes, and have the sense of pitch and rhythm (both these senses improve with practice) can be taught to sing well, even though they may have considered themselves "voiceless."

As a test case, the writer took a pupil, a gentleman who had never sung, and who thought and said he "had no voice." He was a musical and an educated man. His education had made him plastic, and he "had grit," and could therefore bring himself to do exactly as he was told. Having been present at a lecture on "voice" given by the writer in New York, this gentleman came in answer to a statement made during that lecture. The statement was as follows:— "I wish to test the truth of my theories, and I want as a singing pupil a man who 'has no voice,' and who has never sung publicly or privately. But he must be fairly musical and he must know how to obey." The next day came the answer. The gentleman arrived and after some little discussion a start was made. At first we could get nothing but a jugular gurgle; there was *no tone of any sort.* At the second lesson, this pupil *sang* a song by Franz respectably, and in six weeks he could sing, with a fairly crisp and sympathetic voice, arias from "The Creation," "Messiah," "Elijah," etc He has gone steadily on and is improving in volume of voice (which extends to two octaves in range) and in control over it. His musical recitations[1] are also quite noteworthy. He is a Harvard graduate and a law-

[1] Essential to a singer's training.

yer of distinction in New York, was over thirty years of age when he began his vocal studies, and had never sung in his life, because he thought he had "no voice." The case can be verified if need be.

A good singer must reflect good tones. M. Jean de Reszke said to the writer awhile back, "One must sing as one talks." "Yes," was the rejoinder, "and one must talk as one sings," *i.e.*, rightly. Talk on an absolutely balanced breath control, *unclasp the fingers of a rigid civilisation from off your throat*, and express yourself like an educated, musical, gentleman when you speak, and the chances are you will sing like one. The whole body from the heels up will be in the phrase, if (as there cannot be any grave doubt) the theory of *reflex action* be true. Singers as a rule avoid much speaking before they sing. In March, 1901, the writer made an experiment in New York. He read aloud for 2½ hours, talked on the subject of the reading for 1½ hours, gave a public lecture for 2 hours, and at the end sang the following programme (without any interval for rest in between): —"Parsifal," Act 1. Grail Scene (Amfortas); Solos from "Elijah," "Redemption," and "Messiah;" Schubert's "Prometheus" and some other songs. Here was a six hours' continuous use of the "speaking voice" and one hour's use of the same voice in singing. There was no trace of hoarseness or fatigue in the voice at the end. Any local strain would have made such a performance impossible. This incident, also, can be verified.

The writer has never known what a clerical-sore-

throat is, and has (on different occasions) sung when suffering from bronchitis, laryngitis, and the like—without betraying to the public any distress. All this is practical proof of the soundness of the contentions to be found in this volume, and is given purely in their support and merely as a record of fact.[1]

[1] See London "*Referee*," Feb. 23, 1902, under the heading "Queen's Hall."

CHAPTER XI

TONE (Concluded)

Possible disingenuous comments.—Singing and speaking-functions differing in immediate purpose and style.—Five ways of using pronunciation.—Ease of pronunciation a factor in growth of language.—Human indolence.—Prevalence of inartistic speech.—Public appreciation of true speaker.—The Church and the Language of the Liturgy.—Actors and sustained Shakespearian verse.—Levelling up a public duty.—Reason why inefficient vocal work passes muster.—Technical relationship of art to preacher, actor, singer, etc.—Objective, characteristic *versus* "pleasant" tone.—Voice of preacher, speaker, singer, etc., technically the same.—Singer's tone, continuous, just, and therefore beautiful; ethical, æsthetic, actively (vividly) mental and constitutional.—Spiritual, *plus* material effectiveness desirable.—Love, agonising, and self-sacrifice always present in great art.—Varying ideals of tone.—Tone (sung words) expresses emotion without sentimentality, colour without vocal trickery.—Students ask "Am I getting on?" the answer.—Singers and brains.—Jugular, guttural tone, and *l'expression juste*.—Practical suggestions.—Author's object in present inquiry: to help all who want help.—Finished artists need none.—Possible benefit to colleagues' art and his own, by publication and criticism of his contentions.—Definitions.

A cursory glance at a theory, or at the record of an incident has before now afforded ground for a disingenuous, incomplete, and ridiculous comment. It is perhaps necessary to point out that singing and speaking are *not* (in the writer's opinion) synonymous;

nor can it be fairly urged that our arguments lend any colour to a supposition which may possibly be entertained, that we hold the mental and physical activities to be identical in the two functions. Prepared as one is to show the truth of the assertion, that fine pronunciation (result of constitutional balance of vocal power) produces fine tone, yet must one be permitted to demonstrate what the bodily and mental conditions are which go to make fine pronunciation,[1] and to define this word. Further, though it be truly argued that, fundamentally, the conditions underlying pure speech and song are identical, yet, in practice, there are certain points of difference between the two, as will presently be seen.

There are some five ways in which pronunciation can be exercised, viz., ordinary speech, reading aloud, public speech, the actor's speech, and singing. The effective use of all five depends fundamentally on the same principles. As a matter of fact there is only one kind of human utterance (*quâ* voice-production) which can be intelligently and artistically used. The difference between the various modes of performance is a difference of subject, purpose, and style. These constitute matter on which man must exercise his practical, spiritual, and æsthetic capabilities. Hopeless indeed would the task appear to be, of inducing the public to adopt artistic principles. In the evolution of language, philologists recognise ease-of-pronunciation as a factor in the gradual formation of words; so, apparently, we must be

[1] See p. 118, "What is pronunciation?" See also pp. 135, 136.

content when the man in the street utters those words and uses the language made up of them with the least possible trouble to himself. If mankind developed language on the plan of compounding such words as are easy to pronounce, mankind, left to itself, is sure to say those words in the easiest possible manner. We are all a little lazy. So long as the general sense is fairly clear why trouble about so very "unimportant" a matter as pure pronunciation? And yet "there is money in it"! Mankind pricks up its ears, and stops a moment on its way. "But the task is rather a difficult one"! Mankind goes on its way again, and revels in dental, labial, laryngeal, guttural, sternal, and thoracic speech, not beautiful, not true, but—like Mercutio's wound—"it will suffice." The handsome male, the lovely female, are often most attractive—till they speak! When the general public judges singers and actors, small wonder indeed that it cannot sift the wheat from the chaff *in their performances*. When wrong pronunciation or bad diction comes to be regarded as being equally reprehensible with a wrong choice of words; when we realise that defective utterance (which could be cured) is ugly and obstructive to progress, we *may* see this subject ventilated in our schools, public, private and elementary. Corruption of language is a fully recognised fact, which corrupt pronunciation carries to its extreme limit.

It may be urged that we are asking for exact pronunciation of an already corrupt language. The reply is that languages as we find them—words as they

have reached us—are the instruments which poets and musicians have used to bring about their creations. Surely it were well for us if we employed the words of genius, as words, with appropriate colour and completeness. Language, as we find it, is the evolved thought of a nation, and is strongly characteristic of that nation. Besides, there is such a thing as typical, cultured diction; this it is which the singer and the actor must endeavour to acquire. Pure utterance, then, is a matter of public importance, and the medium of national inter-communication must be kept free from noxious sounds. We are agreed that appropriate mural-decoration, attractive placards, artistic magazine-illustrations, fitting architecture and suitable colour in materials (so that houses may not shriek at the landscape) are worth fighting for. If this be true of all these, why not true also of the national tongue?

Public improvement in this regard, would raise the standard of utterance in Church and State. Even really expressive talking is a rarity, and certainly, public elocution needs some reform. Strangely enough, an audience, lenient to its own vocal demerits, sternly denounces indifferent work in the case of all whose business it is to talk well. Something tells people what is "good"[1] and what hopelessly bad. Public judgment is not infallible by any means, and it makes mistakes and loves the wrong thing, for a time at least. But when its master appears, how it

[1] Relatively. It is "good" in proportion as man imparts mental atmosphere to his work.

loves him—with a great and an abiding love! The indistinct and inexpressive actor, the orator who touches not heart and brain, the reader who knows not the secret of the "round mouth," and the singer who fails to "please" and to secure some verisimilitude, are all finally neglected. And the public is right, and would be still more right, if it knew more and judged rather by ideas than by the senses. It is little that the public demands, but that little it must have.

Some day the Church will send her ministers to the right-about for putting her off with a stone when she asks for bread. The language of the Collects and of the Form of Public Prayer[1] is noble. We do not hear it in Church. It may take a long time but, finally, all our actors will learn how to sustain verse, and we shall have Shakespeare again gripping the nation, with less aid from carpenters and milliners. The actor has reformed himself out of the old, bombastic, grand manner; but, in his laudable desire to be simple and undistorted in his pronunciation, he has forgotten how to *sustain*. When conversational speech is become formful as well as intelligible; homiletic speech simple, true, and unaffected; when public reading is at last appropriate, and histrionic speech informed with real-seeming; then will singing have to look to its sovereignty. "Levelling-up" will raise the standard. But the public has this in its keeping; once its ear has been won, criticism is apparently futile; manifest absurdities and imperfections of vocal methods are not necessarily a bar to

[1] Cf. p. 30.

popularity. Why? It would indeed be untrue and ungracious to deny that a generous amount of vocal and histrionic work is being done, and that its quality is such as to demand our gratitude and thankful approval; but we are not now paying compliments merely, we are seeking to account for the reception of all kinds of methods of song and speech which are manifestly incorrect, and for the general acquiescence in that incorrectness.

Why is it that imperfect vocal methods are no bar to popularity? The reply is: anything is good until a better appears. The public ear, unless the true and the false be heard on the same stage at the same performance, does not remember from day to day what a voice is like; at any rate it cannot always analyse its essentials. There may be a misty idea that a voice was loud, big, "pretty" and that it stimulated emotion—not much beside! . . . Vocal dram-drinking! ! Effects are made, and the more superficial they are, the greater the applause—the more delirious the excitement. *Le Roi s'amuse!* Amusement is the "drawing" card. Charlatanism and advertisement draw large crowds and large sums, at all events for a time. Men know better things when they hear them and hear them often; but humanity, like the tiger, delights in having its ears tickled, and will pay large sums for the tickling, till weary of it;—then—claws! The power that elevates, strengthens, inspires, is of another kind, and is not "popular." We have not yet reached Utopia, and so the singer must cultivate frugality.

Returning from our digression, let it be said again that talking, lecturing, reading aloud, preaching, acting, and singing are, as to technique, closely related. The first requires less sustained effort than the others, as is reasonable, seeing that it is a constantly recurring task. Improvement in the singer's art would make talking still more effortless and consequently more beautiful and effective. Life's ordinary affairs require less sustained mental effort than do the affairs of art, and this it is which represents the real difference (*quâ* voice) between talking and lecturing, reading aloud, preaching, etc. In all *public* efforts, the tone (made manifest by vowels and consonants) is more sustained, as is the mental and spiritual effort, seeing that there is a larger field of intellectual and spiritual activity to traverse, and a larger space to fill.

That which must guide the performer in the choice of a suitable manner (whether the task be lecturing, preaching, acting, or singing) is purely æsthetic power. He must cultivate a keen and lively sense of observation; his success will be commensurate with his power of mental transformation.

To return for a moment to the singer's art specially: some persons demand that the performer must be always "pleasing" to the senses, whatever the character of the rôle he undertakes. This, in judging vocalisation, is an error, or we must put back the clock. A "pleasing" "Mime" for instance! A "Mephistopheles," *par example*, who is a master of light, flippant comedy! (Gounod suffers at the hands of his

interpreters). The fiend,[1] according to many, is certainly a roaring devil who rejoices in sonorous mountebankism. The vocal qualities coming direct from the brain, and suggesting the "spirit that denies," "mocks" and "accuses the brethren," do not seem to be missed by most audiences. A fiend is not a "pleasing" personage. He should make you shiver and hate (perhaps pity), instead of laughing at him. Again, "Beckmesser" is often clowned, being represented as a lover of mirth-provoking antics, while Wagner's creation is an acknowledged Master-Singer—a keen critic according to his lights, and a man who was certainly very much in earnest. To clown the part is a very sorry way out of the difficulty of *singing* it with appropriate colour.

It is not here suggested that the tone should be made grotesque or ugly—by artifice. All that one should wish to hear would be such a tone as a real "Mime" would use,—viz., the tone of a morally crooked, mean dwarf, or that of a "Mephistopheles" which would convey the hate, mockery, and moral ugliness of the spirit which confounds vice with virtue and rejoices in the task.

To return: reading, preaching, acting, and singing depend for their efficient practice on the same vocal principles. They differ in subject, object, and style of treatment; but as far as the technical voice is concerned, it is, or it ought to be, the same [2] in all; with this difference, that the singing voice is neces-

[1] We are dealing with the personal "devil" of drama.
[2] In the matter of production.

sarily *more sustained* than the others. For the singer, perfection is only reached when tone is ever present; when vowel is merged in vowel, word joined to word without a break, *i.e.*, when there is, so to speak; no "daylight" between one word and another. In such case, the musical phrase is preserved, as it should be (seeing that it is a separate entity), while the value of the poetic phrase is not lost. The singer has, and ever will have, many difficulties to overcome; his struggle with his failures will be lightened by clinging to a few ideals, by reducing every question, as far as he can, to its unit. Let him seek for the foundation of all art, for the universal principle running through the whole phenomenon. On thus considering the singer's art, he will come, we believe, to the conclusion that *beauty apart from justness is unattainable, tone without mind a vanity, æsthetics without ethics a snare.* The material without the spiritual will not supply him with a satisfying and an abiding standpoint. He will be compelled to see that original creation is the artist's only hope of real eminence and of kinship with divine principle; and, further, that this creation, this manifestation of original mind, is the universal principle running through all art-phenomena. In this way only can cause and effect be yoked together. But in this union of cause and effect, justness is manifested; and for the putting forth of effort to attain to this justness, the great principle of love finds occasion to reveal its highest glory. The work will be done for the love of it, material advantage often lying in another direction. It will be the

artist's joy even to agonise, in order to try and include the human, the divine, and art (a manifestation of both) in one great energy. So by degrees the self-sacrifice, the absence of self-consciousness, without which love cannot reveal itself or prove its existence, will lead to a longing for the highest attainable outlook.

In the career of the serious student there will be felt first of all, this striving after justness—the correlation of thought to tone and of tone to thought—as the chief aim. For if he attempt to produce a tone—a merely physical tone—which may be right to-day and wrong to-morrow, he will condemn himself to the fate of a mariner whose ship is without a rudder. Speaking for himself, the writer bears witness to the fact that tone-building, by means of exercises and a jargon of syllables, was to him nothing but useless torture;[1] and his settled conviction is that the only way of securing effective voice is to trust to mind and reason. The student will therefore watch and listen whether his pronounced word reproduces the thought which is in the word, together with its atmosphere. *When the sung word expresses an emotion without sentimentality, and displays colour without a trick—i.e., without distortion of larynx and mouth, the student is advancing.* Could anything be more pitiful to hear, than the perplexed question which pupils often ask, "*Is* that tone right?" Think, breathe, pronounce comprehensively, and you will, when the word falls

[1] Just as is the case with the study of classic languages, when there is no human interest to inspire it.

upon your ear, find out that you are true to the thoughts entrusted to your care by poet and composer. All the "right" there is—is in that truthfulness. Every fairly intelligent student *ought to know when his tone is "right," if he use his brain.*

In discussing this absorbing question, viz., voice culture, every thoughtful critic, almost without exception, expresses the opinion that singers, as a class, are not overburdened with brains. The writer's opinion (if it be worth the giving) is, that singers have just as much brains as other folk, only they do not use them. They depend on voice, *pretty*, *pleasing*, *sensuous*, *loud* voice. It is a far cry from the jugular tenor to the guttural bass, and it is some distance from the latter to *l'expression juste;* still a very large percentage of singers have this journey to make. If they faint not by the way they will at last find themselves in the neighbourhood of this same *expression juste*, though great circumspection is needful to avoid misleading tracks. It is true also that every attained ideal gives birth to another and a higher one.

To the end that the student may secure that justness of tone, which has already been noted as his chief aim, he will seek to rid himself of the rigid throat, and will exercise himself both in speech and song, will travel and observe men and cities (all sorts and conditions of men and of cities), and will obtain personal experience of opera, oratorio, *lieder*, and of the work of actors and orators. It is not unwise to mark down such actors, etc., as are simple and unaf-

fected in their methods. Slowly, obstacle after obstacle will disappear; the singing of poems by Goethe, Schiller, Heine, etc., in addition to those of poets of the English school,[1] will bring a breadth of pronunciation, which cannot fail to affect the singer's tone. After many days he will find that he can give spontaneous readings of any kind of vocal music. He who has been along it, knows the road, and whither it leads; and knows that it is best to keep to the middle of it; not one day this and another day that, but ever in pursuit of a definite object. Holding these opinions, one cannot but regard with stern disapproval him who leads the blind astray. The teacher was not born to play the sphinx.

To sum up:—Rule the body with the mind, from the start, and the body will say, æsthetically and spiritually, what the mind wishes it to say. Inform technique with mind. A singer's technique deals with the means whereby he transmits thought from his own to other brains. It is also the result of the discipline of the means, viz., the power of the singer over his means. These are vocal chords and breath. Related to them, in the act of singing especially, are laryngeal, buccal, and nasal cavities, the tongue, the jaw, the cheeks, the larynx, the pharynx, etc.—the throat generally, front and back. Relaxation, *not flaccidity*, will look after these parts, and the singer need only set them free to do their work; he will

[1] Study Schubert and Schumann (songs) and you will know these German poets in their gems of thought; study Tennyson, Browning, Shelley, Keats, etc., etc., and get their meaning.

know they are free if he be unconscious of them. The chief factor in breathing is the diaphragm, related to which are the intercostals, the dorsals, and the abdominal muscles, etc.[1] Use all, abuse none. The whole muscular system from feet upward to diaphragm can be utilised successfully, so that the task of singing may be proportionately distributed all over the body, from below—upward. Distribution or subdivision of labour is essentially natural. The diaphragm becomes a voluntary muscle in effect, *i.e.*, it becomes tractable and useful to the desired end (singing) through discipline and mental activity. Normally, or rather usually, it is (in effect) an involuntary muscle, though it possesses voluntary tissues; discipline converts it into a voluntary one, within limits, those limits being the length of the phrases necessary for intelligent and artistic song, and also the length of the breath requisite for those phrases. Mental discipline will moreover cause a general co-ordinate activity of the whole muscular system, so that the weight of the will-force in action falls, not upon one single point, but upon the whole bodily organism. Every organ concerned in the task of singing must be brought into line through co-ordinate and organic activity. All this presupposes *faith*, *courage*, *patience*, *perseverance*. A collapsed diaphragm means collapsed singing, and it also means local, and not constitutional, breathing.

When the word "constitutional" is used above, it is not suggested that there is such a thing as *cumula-*

[1] See pp. 93, 96, etc.

tive muscular action possible for the singer (or for any one else). Rather, one means that the activity of the muscles is *supplementary* and *co-ordinate*. Diaphragmatic control enables singers to perform under unfavourable conditions. In this connection the late Anton Seidl's remark to the writer was "Great singers can always sing." If the lower trunk support the higher trunk in vocal matters, clerical and vocal sore throats become rare. Throats do become sore at times, the throat being a kind of thermometer; but diaphragms never have "sore throats" once they have been properly trained.

In abdominal and diaphragmatic (local) straining, there is, no doubt, danger of *hernia* and other signs of ill-treated mechanism. But in *mental* and normal use of the diaphragm, together with the co-ordination of all the other muscles, there is no danger whatever of any damage being done, internally or externally (*i.e.*, to the figure).[1] At first when setting up deep control of breath, the muscles around the waist become tired, but only for a short while. All weariness disappears when enough time has elapsed to strengthen and mentalise a set of muscles of which very little use has been previously made in breathing. *Liberty of action, depth of breath-control, conservation of energy (breath), relaxation of muscular rigidity, naturalness of method, simplicity of aim, directness and frankness of expression, are some of the singer's eternal principles.* Their application must be left to him in private study.

[1] This is true of both male and female vocalists.

Having thus traversed the ground of all human utterance under the guidance of Nature; having been led by unvarying principles of Evolution, as we understand it to-day, we have arrived at a point where we may venture to add to our definitions of singing. For, after all, Nature works and works; examines, selects, rejects, until she obtains her type. So it would seem natural and reasonable that we should, in all that has been written, aim at *typical* definitions. In this way, perhaps, the wisdom of the world of singing may employ itself upon our conclusions, and, for the benefit of mankind, show us where we have gone astray.

Definitions.

I.

Singing is a natural, easy and controlled, musical and poetic expression of an inner self, which has been enriched by the creations of inspired men.

II.

To sing is to use all natural endowments for the expression of all natural thoughts, sentiments, emotions.

III.

a. Singing is the result of the simultaneous activity of all physical, mental, and spiritual elements in man, through the medium of voice, for the purpose of musical expression.

Or *b*. Singing is the unifying of the senses, the intellect, the soul and physical power.

Or *c*. Singing is the vocal expression of physical and sensuous, intellectual and spiritual power.

Or *d*. The act of singing is the result of the operation of the senses, the mind, and the soul, upon the human frame, for which "voice" acts as a medium of expression.

Or *e*. Human singing is an energy of the human frame, acted upon by the senses, the mind, and the soul.

IV.

Singing is the outward, audible sign of inward spiritual mind.

V.

a. Singing is a communicated expression of Divine, through Human, Mind; whose innate power, with favourable environment, makes poetic, musical, orderly comment upon it by means of voice.

Or *b*. Singing is the vocal result of musical heredity, *i.e.*, of æsthetic and spiritual sensibility; and of environment.

Or *c*. A singing voice is the result of a compelling desire to sing.

Or *d*. To sing is to reveal the varied objects of poets' and musicians' artistic regard and treatment.

PART II

Style, Oratorio, Opera

CHAPTER I

STYLE

The style cannot be other than the man.—"Classic," "romantic," "musical" style.—Unmusical metronomes (human and mechanical).—The style is the man, not the brute.—Education, rhythm, some conductors.—Hans Richter and Felix von Weingartner.—Appreciation, modesty, openness to impression, simplicity.

"The style is the man," nor can it be anything else; for as the man is, so must the manner of his expression be. Since there are men and men, there are styles and styles; and as there are stages in character-growth, so there are styles that are mature, and others that are immature. Every one who has familiarised himself with the ground-ideas of makers of History, has introduced into his mind universal thoughts which sooner or later affect his character. But the thoughts of others, as a general thing, seek and find kindred thoughts in a man's mind, and an amalgam is made, so that a man's original tendencies, which are also the results of mental activity, are only strengthened. The man remains the same, and so does his style. We talk of "acquired" *style;* it does not deserve the title, seeing that it is an affectation, a mannerism or a mimicry, having nothing of characteristic or idiosyncrasy about it.

In music—in all art, we speak of two great schools of style, the Classic and the Romantic,[1] in which there will ever be gradations according to the degree of poise or balance acquired by man.

There is in music one other "style," neither classic nor romantic; an angry man might call it frankly brutal, sincerely vulgar, colossally ignorant, or—exclusively musical. It loves to call itself by the latter name. The modish company which affects this "style" is not charitable; it would gladly annihilate all but those who take a metronome to represent rhythm. Most sure it is that the metronome has its uses, and most certain that it is mechanical, and would drive a man mad were he forced to play or sing to it when serious work is to be done.[1] Elastic and truly rhythmic tempi or beats, commodious and non-tyrannical, are better than spasmodic, brutish, juggernautish nods.[2] An educated man's idea of time will ever show that he has been led out of mechanical ideas. He will differ from some *bad* orchestral player who has exchanged his slavery[3] for tyranny; who has, in other words, been elevated to the conductor's desk, to the ruin of individual effort and to the destruction of the spirit of music. He usually

[1] These words bear a symbolic meaning; no sharp line can be drawn between them. The classic has a romantic flavour, and the romantic a classic basis.

[2] The writer, who has travelled a good deal, has met musicians who would have ruined spontaneous utterance by forcing it to sing to the soulless ticking of a metronome, giving as their reason that they had applied the machine to every bar of the composition.

[3] Slavery to him.

loves floral tributes—this type.[1] An ill-educated "musical" bigot can never do much more than turn an orchestra into a street piano in the matter of time and rhythm. A good orchestral fiddler (there is no harm in the word) makes a good conductor, provided he has qualities of mastery about him; but a bad orchestral fiddler will never make a good conductor.

Great is the harm done by gentry of the sort described above; they ruin oratorio, *e.g.*, making it void and of none effect. Bigotry in music is as noxious as it is in religion. Before a man can acquire style—which is the *man* and not the *brute*—he must read great books, and move among men and women who are accustomed to think. Symphonies and oratorios were not written for the special glorification of the unhappy and distressing personalities which find degeneration in the worship of themselves. An inelastic time-measurer, can never give us characteristic Bach or Beethoven, Mozart or Wagner. Metronome marks are never more than approximate at best. Rhythmic time, as all men know, is essential to style, and all good artists love their "four in the bar." But, rejection of inelastic *tempi* must not run riot and develop into universal *tempo rubato*. It is certain however that genial and gentle men are far more likely to understand the musical writings of genial and gentle men, than is the man who permits himself to become the *tyrant* of the conductor's stool. There need be no misunderstanding. A practised player of instruments, an orchestral player, *may be*,

[1] The Anglo-Saxon dislikes it—fortunately.

of all men, the very best to conduct. All that has been said is, that, when a man has played in an orchestra, he is not *ipso facto*, a promising conductor, who must be a man of education.

Different schools and different styles teach us to be broad. Men who, like Richter and Weingartner, are objective, and others who emphasise other qualities in art, give us abundant food for thought. Goethe is reported to have reproved some foolish comparison-makers when he said "You ought to be glad you have two such fine fellows among you" (alluding to Schiller and himself). And so there is no attempt at comparison, no impertinent desire to praise; one may, however, appreciate. Pigmies cannot appraise giants, and pigmies can never grow, unless they be modest when listening to eminence as it speaks. A man's openness to impression depends on his modesty. Every personality, of whatever sort, must be enriched by lessons culled from great performances—lessons of strength, repose, cleanliness of purpose, loyalty to ideals, devotion to a cause. The greatest and noblest style is ever the simplest. The present writer can never forget Weingartner's exclamation, behind the scenes at the Opera-house in Berlin, after a soul-stirring performance of Beethoven's "Pastoral" and Mozart's "Jupiter" symphony. "Children," cried he, "we must seek to be simpler—ever simpler."

CHAPTER II

STYLE (Continued)

Style not a mystery, riddle, or matter for *hocus-pocus*.—First thing needful is dominion over frenzy.—Self-taught *versus* cheap-dear style.—Style and the man, once you have got at him.—Good masters.—Personal discipline, agonising, growth.—The Bible and Shakespeare.—General reading, reading aloud.—Literary (at bottom, musical) style is moral, measured, purposeful, critical denunciation and exaltation.—Appreciation of cause and effect, humour.—Robert Browning.—*Pippa Passes*.—*My Last Duchess*.—*Prospice*.—Effect of wide culture and outlook upon style.—The Theatre.—Sir Henry Irving.

The study and discussion of style have, not infrequently, been turned into mysteries, and into readings of sphinx-riddles. This helps no student, produces no artist, however remunerative it may be. A mysterious compound, this same "style;" costly, and full of a *hocus-pocus*, which does neither priest nor people any good!

Let us endeavour to analyse the compound. The first ingredient we find in it is, *dominion over passion and frenzy*. Pegasus is a fiery steed, and needs to be driven on a curb; the harness must be well made, too, or he will run away with you altogether one fine day. *Passion and zeal, with reason enthroned above them, inform a performance with divine fire*. The discipline of emotions must be strict, and it must be your own discipline. If you desire to preserve originality,

your style must not be copied or taught. True, you may be taught how *to teach yourself* style, but that is all the teaching that will be of service to you in the matter of *how* to do your work. *Crescendo*, accent, *et id genus omne*, must be the composer's entirely, or your own; in this latter case, mature thought is imperative. Text and music must fit you, and you must do the fitting.

Sartorial centres turn out very good ready-made garments; they can never be anything but ready-made; you can tell them anywhere, tell who made them, what they are worth, and how long they will last. In a multitude of counsellors there is safety, say some; one gives "voice production," another "diction," another "readings," another "style." Not infrequently the original thing which constitutes voice, diction, style, and reading, loses itself and ceases to grow, while undergoing the different processes; and eventual (possible) eminence is supplanted by self-assertive mediocrity. *For the style is the man, once you have got at him.* Good masters are good gifts; what we mean is that students try to substitute the master's labour for their own personal individual struggle. The brave and independent student allows his style to grow with him. Deep thought—deep to agony (while avoiding morbidity), healthy self-criticism on mental and spiritual lines, will bring a satisfying style. A sprinkling of accents and expression-marks, pepper-box way, paralyses a man's effort and turns out "stylish" singers of low degree. "A thin veneer of polish on a solid block of

ignorance," as a caustic Welsh cleric once said to some candidates for ordination.

No more perfect commentary on style [1] can you find than the Bible, and Shakespeare's writings. Literary style consists of saying the right thing, in the right way and place. He who confines himself entirely to his own particular branch of study, will never secure a convincing style. A singer must read books on literary and artistic subjects, which supply him with illustrations, with a case in point, so to speak. As he studies poetry and literature generally, any observant singer, *especially if he read aloud*, will observe how the mind works in its efforts to create a desired and desirable impression. In the work of a master of literary style, there is no sense of hurry, or of anxious grip, though there may be one of movement and of tense grasp. Word succeeds word with stately dignity, the *crescendo* is gradual and sustained, until the climax arrives. In Scripture (as in Shakespeare) the writer conveys, for the most part, the desired impression. Poet and Prophet create the picture which they see in their own mind, and that mind, having, in the main, a moral purpose [2] before it, sees the thing as it should be seen—as it *is*. Denunciation is measured—prophetic. Read the words of Samuel to Saul after the slaughter of the Amalek-

[1] Literary is, at bottom, musical style.

[2] If he have no such purpose no writer can claim to be a "natural" Artist. He condemns himself to hold a philosophy similar to that of Browning's Caliban:

"As it likes me each time, I do: So He."

ites. The temper of the passage is dignified, for all the wrath which seethed in the Prophet's heart. Samuel spoke for his office, which to him was sacred and not to be tampered with, even by the king. But you feel that it is an affair of kings and prophets, not of demagogues and priestlings. The case is the same when exaltation, and not anger, is the incitement to emotion. Whatever the emotion may be, the speaker, writer, and singer must govern it justly and appropriately.

Now this he will probably do if he give due attention to the predisposing causes of the action and of his comment thereon, and also to the consequences which may follow both the action and his comment upon it. This means that there is of a necessity humour in an artist's work, such as one may find in the writings of Jean Paul Richter. Robert Browning's style has been much assailed, but it is difficult to agree entirely with some of his critics on this point. His style, when depicting purely poetic ideas, is loftily classic, despite the fact that his was a peculiarly original mind in its method of working, and in its arrangement of thoughts. Perhaps he was over-fond of the mental *hiatus;* and it may be that he credited us with more brains than we possess; but read him again, and yet again, and you will never tire of him. For example, take that dialogue, between Ottima and Sebald in "Pippa Passes," and observe how he approaches the snapping point in the wild words of the carnal pair; but, he never reaches it. One feels ever that he is leading the *dramatis personæ* up to

the very point where they must be confronted with fate or judgment, or what you will, and where nothing else in the world could make the right comment but little Pippa's voice! This is a triumph of perilous daring—courage is perhaps the better word. Then, again, how fine the temper of "My Last Duchess" and of "Prospice!"

To study such things as these is to produce, to some extent, a mental state similar to that of the poet as he wrote. Slowly the power of sifting will grow, *especially when the student reads aloud.* Gradually the brain will assimilate the essentials of a fine delivery. The poetic and the literary gifts are essentially musical; and, in art, allopathy is superior to homœopathy, whatever may be the truth in medicine. The student must never allow the mind to be led away from the subject of his performance, at any point. *If the temper be right, he will not be thinking too much of the action, nor of the comment; of the state or mood he is describing, nor of its effect upon himself, nor upon his audience.* The good artist never thinks of himself, nor of the effect he is producing. He is not consciously trying to produce *any* effect. When selfishness enters, all noble utterance is lost; for though fine effect is ever the result of fine art, it, like health, is never to be acquired by seeking after it. To cure all undue passion and exaltation, therefore, study the style of inspired writings. The theatre is a good teacher, too. Observe an actor like Sir Henry Irving, whose mental *crescendo* and power of concentrated observation and absorption are

unique in our day. General culture and observation help the student to discipline passionate utterance; passionate it must be, for without passion, there is no art.

CHAPTER III

STYLE (Continued)

Style, straightforward and spontaneous, ideal, real, spiritual, honest, unselfish, not tricky, lasting, courageous, long-suffering, fought for.—*Flying Dutchman*, *Hans Sachs*, *Der arme Peter*. —Style, edifying, forced, not easily acquired.—New York robin (redbreast), imitation, good teachers, loyal students.

In the next place style must be *straightforward and spontaneous*. A stilted, halting, mincing, anxious, studied manner can never produce the powerful effect which comes with breadth and ideal realism. If Art fulfil its mission it will transform the Artist and translate him into the realm of the real Ideal. Once he is a denizen of the Ideal world, he will have no narrowness about him, and his real world will be the spiritual, not the material; reality will imply to him not that which he can touch, or taste, or feel, or see. The sights and sounds of this ideal world he will reproduce as simply, straightforwardly, and spontaneously as though he saw it all with the bodily eye. His expression will be easy and flowing, never far-fetched—by which one means that class of expression which is improbable, and which can only appeal to a crazy clique.

He who has no spontaneity, stops to consider what style pleases the largest public, and appeals most to it.

He will finally please no one worth the pleasing, will appeal to no one worth appealing to. Your tricky "artist" who cultivates a spurious versatility, has no real power at his back; sooner or later he will be found out. One may "deceive some of the people, part of the time, but cannot deceive all the people all the time." Aristotle tells us to call no man happy until he is dead. Long probation is necessary to make sure that a man's happiness *is* happiness. Similarly one may say—call no man a great singer *until you see how he lasts, and in what capacity.* Original thought—hard perhaps to persevere in at first—never palls, while the tricky singer never fails to pall in the long (not so very long) run. How many there are who do well at the students' concert and at their professional start. What becomes of them all?

Lasting powers are the result of high ideality, and true spontaneity is ever inseparable from that quality. The people never fail to rise to the man who speaks his message frankly to them. An unconventional art-product may cause bewilderment at first, and time for consideration and absorption must be given; but opportunities occur for a return to the charge and, finally, the artist charges home, and remains there. Whatever message an artist feels it is his to give, let him give it directly and simply. *He will have the right of holding his message true when he has thought long and suffered hard for it.*

Let us imagine an artist at work studying the rôle of "The Flying Dutchman" or of "Hans Sachs," or in contemplation of a scene in three panels like

Schumann's "Der Arme Peter." Kindred dramatic, poetic, and musical thoughts arise within him, slowly, out of the situation.

He may be conjuring up the face of some "Flying Dutchman," some dead painter, maybe, who painted as though the fiend were after him; and who perhaps found his "rest" though he died too soon, because he had nerves which killed him for killing them; and never a "Senta" near him.

Or the artist may be sunk at whiles in affectionate remembrance of some village cobbler, a poet-singer, who dwelt in a hamlet, hidden away among distant hills, in the country of his childhood; and who one day stroked the hair of a curly-headed lad, and spoke, with a curious catch in his voice, at which the lad wondered, saying "Good, my boy, you sing because you must."

Or, last, the student may be thinking on the story of a school-boy lover, who went mad and drowned himself in the black pool at the bend of the river, because his sweetheart had departed for a foreign land, and he, poor boy, was left behind.

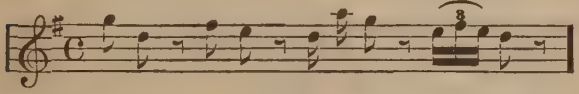
Some such thoughts as these come and colour an artist's musing, and he reproduces unconsciously their effect in his work; they are suggested to him by the products of poet and musician, and he cannot but feel their influence upon his own brain while he utters the music and the words. They are indeed the invisible ladders by which he ascends to the heights of tragedy or of comedy.

It is cowardly to abandon loyal and spontaneous

utterance, because, forsooth, it may be hard to persuade some hearers that there may be superlative beauty in a new and an unconventional conception. Lack of courage is reactionary, and the frank tongue is silenced by it. Once convinced that a certain poem, set to certain music, satisfies your highest artistic aspirations, and is essential to the people's artistic welfare, never yield until your vision has been realised by the people. If you persevere you will reap the hero's reward; if you make no effort you will become a mere wraith of a singer. We have heard it said "You must give the people what they want." 'Tis an expensive game. How often do those who play it, have to change their bill and their cast! As well say—feed children upon sweets! By all means give the people what they "want," but define the word yourself. The doctor often says "You want a tonic." He means it will be good for you. A singer who gives, not what he desires to give but what the public clamour for, is certain to fall a victim to a forced style. He will always be *trying* to say something. Nothing was ever said by "trying," in this sense.

America is a land of spontaneous utterance and generosity to strangers. The writer cherishes a lively sense of obligation to that great country, in particular for the friendship bestowed upon him by two of its distinguished writers in the persons of Katrina Trask and H. M. Alden, whom he, a stranger in a strange land, met during his first visit to the United States. These two strong and gentle spirits—together with others less known to fame—fortified and

nerved him for his work. Experiences of this kind leave a lasting effect upon a personality, and in truth a frank and unfettered style is the result of all such influences upon character, and is not an article a man may buy over a counter. It comes at the end of a prolonged period of study, though one aims at it from the beginning. When an artist has learned his tune, like that robin which the present writer heard in Central Park, New York, on June 5, 1901, he will have gone through a great deal. The American robin is three times as large as our redbreast, and he is a very fine singer. This bird practised diligently on successive days until he secured the intervals he desired, and then it was easy to take down his tune. When the artist has worked hard and experienced much, we can take *his* tune down too, as we did in the robin's case. Here it is:—



This bird was a great Teacher, in that he was a great and unconscious artist, and his song harmonised with life. *This is the test of an Artist's song.* The bird's song told to the listener a beautiful story of bird-life. The hen bird had, a while ago, been sitting on the eggs in another tree, not very far away. He—the teacher bird—chose a branch, a particular one each day, whereon he perched with easy assurance. There was a good canopy of leaves to form a sound-board to his stage. His heart was full of song,

for had not those green-tinted eggs brought forth a number of robins who would all be just as good singers as himself, one fine day. Freely, easily swinging in the breeze, the songster sang to the sun as though in praise of mother-bird. He was apparently evolving a new tune, or at any rate a variation on an old one. At first the notes came somewhat haltingly; but after a long lusty rehearsal, they came forth as surely as if they had been played on a keyed instrument. While he was unconscious of externals he sang; he knew what he wanted to sing, nor did he consider the songs of other birds; he clung to his own. A mere human being, in the person of the writer, seated beneath, incautiously imitated his song. (It *was* an imitation!) The bird—aware he had an audience—straightway ceased, and away he flew. He was singing to the sun, and not to any audience, and with the advent of self-consciousness (first cousin to fear) his song came to an end. Wise robin, great artist of Central Park! He would not try to sing on. He *saw* his "public," became conscious, and fearful for his own safety; and straightway there was an end to all free music. One hoped he would return; he did, when he chose, next day. A mere man had dared put his human whistle, his imitation song, side by side with the bird's free, original pipe, and the bird punished the man for his presumption. No man (of course!) could ever guess at the instinct impulse within the bird's breast, and the imitation frightened the feathered songster. *It is the way with all imitations;* they *are* frightful. They destroy

frank, spontaneous, simple melody, which arises from instinct in the bird, and from a similar instinct, aided by Imaginative Reason, in man. Must all song then be entirely intuitive, and does tuition destroy style and frankness of expression? Not necessarily, by any means. Teachers are indispensable, and we can boast of many good and earnest men and women who devote their lives to the cause. Great indeed is the gratitude which we all owe to faithful masters. But, oh! for more ideas, and for greater loyalty to those with which students have already been endowed by their teachers.

CHAPTER IV

STYLE (Concluded)

Style, spiritual atmosphere, not affected, simple, convincing, effect on general public and on æsthetes.—Imaginative reason, heroes, emperors, Arthurian knights, Saul, Kurwenal, etc., abiding power.—Beatific vision of attainment.—Agile mind, a king's command, hero's resolve, prophet's scorn.—Artist, not a teacher but an Artist, edifying, educational.—Adjustment of values, poetic, musical, minute directions.—Bach, unfettered style, broad style, exact style, pregnant, suggestive, melodic.—Style, a manifestation of character.—Musical, instrumental practice.—Bach.—Beethoven.—Handel.—Haydn.—Mozart.—Schubert.—Schumann.—Franz.—Brahms.—Wagner.—Musical atmosphere.

To the restraining of passion, and to the giving of free expression to original song, must be added *the faculty for compelling an atmosphere charged with spirituality*. This does not mean the superficial affectation which has brought with it pretence and pretentiousness into the churches; whence, one fears, it makes periodical pilgrimages to greet its relative on the stage. Ideal spirituality, or spirituality of idea need not convey the impression that the performer feels himself to be a monopolist in divine and spiritual things—as though one said, "I have penetrated the inmost sanctuary of thought and expression and I bear a special mandate." The spiritual idealist, or the ideal spiritualist, will be very modest and gentle, but very earnest, having a quietly convinced and

convincing air. There will be an atmosphere of simple courage and deep conviction about him and his voice.

The general public will hear him in deep silence. Æsthetes and materialists will behave as though they fancied they hated him and his utterance.[1]

Caught up in the grasp of the "imaginative reason" of which we have read before, the student will, in spirit, cultivate the acquaintance of all characters sung by poets and musicians. Heroes, doers of great deeds, emperors—men who ruled because they *justified* their wearing of the purple—these and their kind will stir the artist-soul with visions of prowess in face of peril; and will nourish it with the far-reaching influence of their words and of their deeds. Earnest students will learn to realise the characteristics of heroes and of kings. In spirit the companions of Arthurian knights, they shall hear the tread of their armed feet. Stirred to emulation by the fidelity of a Kurwenal, and fascinated by the majesty of a Saul; living, moving beside, and breathing the same air with men who have not yielded to the soft slavery of the easy present, but looked forward to the things that are to be, students of song become inspired and of a great and an abiding power. These are they who toil long and fight hard so that the future may become the present in prophetic realisation

[1] The Artist—who is no cheap altruist—needs stout armour and a trusty sword. After a portentous yawn and a gurgling, piteous "*Lasst mich schlafen*," the dragon does its best to destroy the man who dares disturb its slumber.

of ideals, and who accordingly reap their reward in the beholding of the beatific vision of attainment.

Agile and trained to quick transitions, the mind which has lived with noble ideals can project an atmosphere which will be kingly, prophetic, heroic, at will. The command of a king, as Ruskin points out, will have in it all the force of a kingly nature, which comes from the knowledge that his behest will be obeyed. There will be neither hectoring nor browbeating. The declaration of a brave resolve will issue from a hero's lips, tempered with that compassion for the vanquished which prevents the hero from playing the braggart. The scorn of an Elijah will be that of a Prophet of the Lord of Hosts, and will reveal nothing of the mockery of a small-minded, bigoted Baal-priestling.

Simple as all this may seem, it cannot fail to transfigure an artist's soul; and his expression, in consequence, will be educational and uplifting. *An artist sets out to be an artist, pure and simple—and* NOT *a teacher; for all that, he cannot avoid being a great teacher, unconsciously, if he be a great artist; and such* he becomes, when his utterance is just, frank, and atmospheric.

The question of the *adjustment of values*, poetic and musical, the matter of emphasis, accent, rise and fall, contrast and the like must not be lost sight of. The giants of musical composition always use prescribed accents, emphasis and expression marks sparingly. The appearance of many a page of modern music is scarcely reassuring to any one who loves freedom of action because it is a beautiful thing

in itself. There would seem to be little hope of obtaining it when staggering marks are scattered, and rendered invisible by their very frequency on the track. In miniature work one expects miniature directions; yet, if the music be but the text in another language, the accent must be somewhat akin in both; the emphatic word and note must be of equal power and value, except when the composer seeks to secure a greater effect by hastening or deferring the natural accent.

Bach, *e.g.*, does not fetter the singer with explanatory marks in reference to the reading of his works. General education helps the student to adjust values; a course of good reading will make his performance agree in the main with the composer's setting. When rational repose of mind and psychic penetration have established a just sense of proportion in the singer's character; when the thunder—so to speak—is harnessed, and the lightning drawn off into dynamos, then "poetic frenzy" will do what is expected of it, and the artist-car will run on automatically and smoothly enough. Thoughtful study of text and music cannot fail to make it clear *that the two are one.* The resultant of the combined pair is just as much one thing as either taken singly. The expression of that one thing must depend upon mental discipline, and not upon how many *crescendo* marks the composer is forced to add. If one must be told when the spirit is to "call forth its powers and dare" a flight into realms of poetry and song, it is to be feared that there will not be much beating of wings. All this applies to works of magnitude.

On the other hand, the cunning master will set before his students—or the student, if he be poor, must do it for himself—models of a perfect union between words and music in lyrics. The Sonnet and the Epic are different things, and the treatment of them must be appropriately different. In dainty and subtle lyrics every bar must be learnt and sung *exactly* as the composer has marked it. Nor must this class of song be neglected. Exact miniature work is of great value in establishing delicacy of touch. *The student, who reverences the independence of other men's minds as well as that of his own*, enjoys the discipline which is to be secured in dealing with such songs as Robert Franz has written. In these compositions, every mark means something; the composer has, with infinite patience and precise knowledge of poetic values, worked with a magnifying glass, if we may so express it, upon every one of his songs. The gentle lovingness and the lyric tenderness of the man's nature are evident in every bar, leading the young disciple unconsciously, step by step, until he be ready to undertake independent work. Any student who sits down before the songs of Robert Franz stores his memory with lessons of nice and spiritual expression; for they abound in these models of patient, sensitive, musical eloquence.

Our German neighbours are never weary of insisting upon the necessity for "pregnant consonants." We may borrow the word and speak of a pregnant style—full of suggestion and promise of development. No style is mature, unless it suggest more

than it says. Once at the end of his powers, once the finite fails to hint at the infinite, the singer holds no further interest for progressive humanity. With care and thought, these simple suggestions in regard to style will eventually crystallise into actual causative facts. When a singer can suggest more than he says, we may feel confident that he will not readily come to the end of his resources, and may expect that he has little surprises in store for us. M. Jean de Reszke assured the writer a few years ago, that he never sang any rôle twice alike. Elasticity is one of the marks of creative, as receptivity is a sign of coming genius, when there are impressions waiting to be noted and received.

When students preserve the melody in each word and note, sentence and phrase, they cannot stray far from home. Above all things, let them be independent of praise and dispraise, when they know that they are fighting to give evidence that the good God made them.

Style is a manifestation of character; the loftier the latter, the more exalted the former is bound to become. The reader has doubtless observed that, in this chapter, the *attitude of the mind* in reference to expression and utterance has chiefly occupied us. The remarks are applicable to the literary writer, the orator, the actor, as well as to the singer. For the latter type of artist, a complete acquaintance with Musical Form is necessary. The science of sound as manifest in musical compositions must form the subject of separate study.

Every singer should play some instrument sufficiently well to enable him to acquire an exact sense of rhythm and pitch. The compositions of the great Masters, in some shape or other, should form his daily food. The characteristics of the musical form of each Master should in turn occupy the mind. The profound scholarliness of Bach, passionately religious, instinct with weighty and loud-resounding eloquence; the Titanic might of defiant Beethoven, valiant apostle of Humanity; the pomp and majesty of Handel; the geniality of Haydn; the lone genius of the gentle Mozart; the unfettered naturalness of self-tutored Schubert, the child of nature, who could not die because "entirely new harmonies and rhythms" were in his head; the eclectic yet fervent self-absorption of the recluse Schumann, whose note is as much the note of a musical cloister as that of the busy haunts of men; the studious, lyric melody of Franz; the lofty, muttered themes of Brahms; and the imaginative, literary, and significant strains of Wagner; *all* these attributes appertain to musical style and can be grasped only by a study of the works in which they appear. The perusal of scores apparently can teach men the science of the musical tongue, and can develop a style without much aid from text-books. But, whatever the source, there must be knowledge of music *as music*, and the acquirement of skill, in some sort, as instrumentalists, or else the singer's work will lack a something which cannot well be put into definite words, but which we may roughly designate—musical atmosphere.

CHAPTER V

ORATORIO (In Comparison with Opera)

Popularity of Opera.—Wagnerian tenets.—Results on music?—Opera *versus* music-drama.—Which the higher art-form, opera or oratorio?—Opera not supreme in music qua music.—"Don Giovanni," "Fidelio," "Die Meistersinger."—Nature's activity, effect on music-drama.—Operatic history in relation to oratorio, opera enthusiasm, effect of drama upon music.—Hänsel und Gretel.—Beckmesser.—Colorature.—The "Messiah."—Sims Reeves.—Intemperate use of Colorature.—"Hamlet."—Calvé, musical effects.—"Amen" chorus, the "Messiah."—Quintette (Die Meistersinger).—Wagner, Bach, Beethoven.—*Bel-canto* composers and imaginative reason.—Scenic music, continuous verbal *cum* musical movement.

Oratorio and opera performances are frequented by two separate classes who, as a general thing, do not interchange their modes of relaxation. Owing largely to the influence of the prophet of Bayreuth, the echoes of operatic propagandism have filled the world; and his is the glory of having spoken the last word upon the matter to the world at large, for the present. So it will continue to be until some new rebel arises, with some sense in his rebellion. In Wagner's works (especially in the later ones) we see that he was at variance with his predecessors, except in so far as they had been loyal to ultimate truth of expression, *i.e.*, such convincing expression as springs rationally out of the text, and beyond which

you could not expect them to go at the time. It was expression of this kind, and this alone, which stood for their share of the world's spontaneous utterance, and nothing else had any value in his eyes. His imaginative reason refused all other modes of musical eloquence. Unless the succession of musical sounds which constituted the phrase expressed musically and dramatically the same thing as the poetry expressed in literary form, he would none of it.

Operatic verisimilitude would seem to depend upon some such theory as this, though the effect upon music of an unduly rigid adherence to this doctrine is perhaps hard to determine. Perhaps many music-lovers do not thoroughly understand Wagner, any more than they have as yet plumbed the depths of Bach. It is even possible that the great dramatic composer has not, in spite of his voluminous writings, explained *himself;* and it may be that the full significance of him may dawn upon mankind, only when future generations have brought their light to bear upon his *compositions*. With the advent of a calmer view of his works, which time, improved conditions, and technique alone can bring, the exact amount of profit and loss to the world's music, arising from the reforms of Gluck and Wagner will be duly estimated.

The personal triumph of the personal Wagner is complete; and also, a thing which would have distressed him had he foreseen it, the triumph of the "operatic" idea over the general public. Few indeed realise the difference between "opera" and "music-drama," and not many are aware that Wag-

ner abjured opera after "Lohengrin." The general public *listens* to opera from the standpoint of pre-Wagner writers of opera, and not from that of intelligent observers of the drama; and this same public is liberally catered for. All the world wants to write Opera, and accordingly—to quote the epithet of a distinguished Oxford linguist—the "lunatic" side of the operatic stage continues. Although much that obtains on the operatic stage seems to spell "lunacy" in the opinion of scholars (and this should not be the case if opera were a finally typical form of art), yet to the large majority of the public it is a very pleasant form of "lunacy;" it amuses and entertains them. Had the world laid to heart Wagner's distinction between opera and drama, it would have cured itself long ago of its mental aberration. It has done neither, and so continues to confound the two, clinging meanwhile to its false gods.

But which, after all, is the higher form of art and has produced the nobler music on the whole? Do social leaders ever ask this question? The event in every great metropolis is—a new opera. It is unfortunate that the value to music (*quâ* music) of this form of art should be so exaggerated.[1] Other forms

[1] Although the name of Damrosch is held in well deserved esteem for able and energetic efforts, yet comprehensive oratorio work is practically impossible in New York; and London cannot boast of much public support in this direction, despite the devotion of Sir F. Bridge, Mr. Henry J. Wood, and Mr. Arthur Fagge (with their respective organisations), the good work done by the National Sunday League under Mr. Churchill Sibley and Mr. F. Allen Gill, and by others.

of musical development suffer, and a tendency toward making abstract music more and more articulate and concrete shows itself among composers.

The public must finally learn that, hitherto, opera has not made for the highest in music, either in regard to composer or performer. Many people will fiercely resent this statement. But it is not so terrible as it looks. Let us calmly consider the matter. It is not here implied that an operatic composer cannot attain to the highest music in his operas; our claim is that, as a general thing, he has not done so. Mozart's "Don Giovanni," Beethoven's "Fidelio," and Wagner's "Die Meistersinger," do not cover the whole of the ground, although the achievement in these three masterpieces stands supreme in the history of the lyric stage, and may be said to contain the promise of further achievement, which in the course of time will surely become more general. For Nature is at work, and doubtless there will ensue a more adjusted, a truer balance between the æsthetic and spiritual qualities of the mind and soul. When composers as such shall have secured greater freedom of action;[1] when knowledge of effect and of the means of securing it enable the musician to put forth his powers under supreme control; though we perchance may not, our successors will possess more ideal operas and music-dramas than even those the world has hitherto put to its credit. *After all, the world is very young, and can well afford to grow older over the task of producing a man in whom human*

[1] *I.e.*, for their musical powers.

passions and emotions shall have assumed a character farther and farther removed from the elementary one they possess in the animal man.

The brain of man, the upward journey once begun, has been separating him more and more from the lust of sheer sensuous emotionalism. Through artistic evolution, using the words in their highest sense, there *must* finally appear sublimer types of spiritual passion, more and more remote from, and less and less dominated by, animalism and frenzy. Nature has already made brain superior to muscle; small wonder if her next task be the production of such a passion as shall have more of psychic than of physical propensities in it. The musician, of all people will benefit by this advance, and so will operatic writers and singers. But even then, when this shall have come to pass, it will still be true that the loftier the theme, the purer the music. Oratorio will continue to hold its own, musically, and in the end will reward opera for its efforts in the direction of verisimilitude by absorbing and making it one with itself. We must look upon Nature as a whole [1] and cease to separate activities which will finally be seen to make for the same end. To draw sharp lines between Classicism and Romanticism is to weaken both. What the name of the new form of art [2] will be, no man can tell; but we will presume to suggest

[1] Disintegration is a study for the realisation of monistic truth.

[2] Made up of oratorio and opera and foreshadowed by Anton Rubinstein in his "Biblical Operas."

to future generations that a good title for it would be SYMBOL.

Our concern at the moment however, is with past and present operatic history in its relation to oratorio.

Now, opera-bred music-lovers, the general run of them, are apt to be fervent, scenic, dramatic—aggressively all three—in their ideas of music. The operatic type is characterised by a certain narrowness of vision, and we are all expected to look through his spectacles. Dramatic verisimilitude is indeed fascinating and absorbing. Instantaneous, photographic illustration of poetry and drama, with and by means of music, produces an effect so immediate and moving that the ear, trained to listen for a quick correspondence between poetic-dramatic thought and the music which expresses it, becomes impatient of anything which keeps the action waiting, so to speak. The reproduction of poetic-dramatic thought in musical form; the telling of the story; the preserving of action and movement; the developing of "character" (histrionic) by means of form—all these things demand some such treatment as Wagner gave them in his works, on lines which differed fundamentally from the methods of other composers. The music must not indulge in independent flights, it must ever wait upon the play when the *dramatis personæ* are in evidence. Yet, though it be conceded that vain repetitions and gratuitous *roulades* and *fiorituri* cannot help to develop dramatic action as such, still the belief is justified, that there exists a

form of music which is far higher and purer than operatic music (in which the above-named considerations have been held paramount) has ever been.

Our successors will assuredly claim that neither opera nor music-drama has said the last word, musically. The learned reader does not of course think that it has, but the general public does so imagine—in so far as it thinks about the matter at all. The very fact that "the play's the thing," makes for undue restraint, which cannot fail to develop the sense of tension and of frenzy, which too often overtakes operatic and dramatic music.[1] The closer a composer clings to his story, *as things are*, the more likely he is, in proportion as that story is scenic and dramatic, to be dominated by storm and stress.

Since Wagner's death no opera superior to "Hānsel and Gretel" has seen the light. The story is imaginative and humorous and the music is consequently of a healthy order; the plot does not interfere with the music, nor the music with the plot.

It seems difficult to determine how far Wagner descended from Olympian heights and was justified, when he undertook to make a mock of narrow sticklers for form, as he admittedly did in "Die Meistersinger."

The tyranny of strict purists of the pedantic sort

[1] The difference between opera and drama is the difference between subjective and objective treatment of the same subject.

assuredly deserved castigation, for it fettered the singing-bird. Ridicule kills, and the songster must be allowed to sing. Mockery is easy—and dangerous; it runs away with itself. One may question whether it has a place in a work of art, however able the method of the treatment and however valuable it may be in the shape of humorous relief.

Degenerate and torpid *coloratur* music is doubtless of no value, and (to make a sudden excursion into the subject of oratorio music) even the *coloratur* music of Handel, *e.g.*, fails in its purpose when sung as a mere vocal exercise. But it is practically certain that this particular form of musical expression was never intended for general use in the musical depicting of quickly moving, graphic, and continuous drama. Nevertheless it had and it has its uses, as is proved by the fact that, in spite of the dull puritanical treatment to which it has at times been subjected, "Messiah" holds its own to-day not only in the estimation of the public, but in that of the most eminent musicians of the world. No one has hitherto disputed with Handel the honour of setting, in epic musical form, the Christ life, as it is unfolded in Scripture—although we read that the librettist thought the composer might have done better!

No one who ever heard Sims Reeves could deny that he made, in "Every valley" and "The enemy said," more musical and dramatic effect (*i.e.*, such a rational effect that men of great talent in other than musical directions, as well as those of smaller account, could understand and appreciate it) than can

be claimed by a whole opera-company, orchestra, *act-finale* and all. He made one picture out of the numerous phrases and roulades, creating an artistic unit by reason of his musical clairvoyance. And the music lived its own life, free and unfettered; it arose out of the situation just as truly as Wagner's music did; and it was moreover adapted to its high theme, was simple indeed, but capable of endless expansiveness. The same holds true of such choruses as "Hallelujah," "The horse and his rider," and the like. In the "Amen" chorus ("Messiah") there is a majesty, and a divine drama, such as no development of any final scene in opera can eclipse. The glory of that wide ocean of music, whose waves surge ever higher and higher—up to the Infinite, stands alone.

Strange to relate, however, too many opera-bred musicians hear nothing in this but vain repetition. The din and the frenzy, which one is apt to feel in many an operatic performance, obscure the imaginative reason of man. Let mankind hear with their ears and understand with their hearts, and music of the "Messiah" class stands out, eternal in its own strength. If we take, *e.g.*, such recitatives as "For behold, darkness shall cover the earth," and "Thus saith the Lord," and if we sing them with the *timbre* which suits the character of the words and the music, and not with the pharyngeal and "boo-boo" sounds too often heard, we shall find these to be masterpieces which can hold, and have held, thirty thousand people enthralled by means of one solitary

voice. Such a thing is *impossible* under present conditions in opera.

It was of course vain to imagine that *coloratur* could be suitable to all kinds of sentiments and situations, especially to those of a purely mundane character. The roulade lends itself with particular suitability to religious and purely heroic subjects, and to any situation indicative of a fixed mood as, *e.g.*, it was used by Ambroise Thomas in the Ophelia music ("Hamlet"). Madame Calvé, it has been said, in this rôle, "rose superior to the music"; but this was not so. Her glory was, that she had sufficient docility to see the possibilities of the music, and that her powers helped her to realise them. These are self-evident truths, but the one-sidedness of the opera-bred musician makes it necessary to emphasise them.

We may reasonably rejoice in the continuous development of drama, and revel in the pulsations of music which sways with every emotion of the heart and varies with every change of mood; but we may also reasonably enjoy our contemplative, spiritual, religio-heroic measures, which owe their impressiveness as much to their inherent musical strength as they do to the subject-matter which they musically illustrate. In these measures are included *cantilene* and *coloratur*, whether of the vocal solo, or of the multi-voiced chorus. The "Amen" chorus ("Messiah"),[1] to put it very mildly, is equally lofty *quâ* music with the *Quintet* in "Die Meistersinger," and

[1] The oratorio enthusiast must not suppose that this statement covers the ground of the writer's own opinion on this point.

equally effective; nor must it be forgotten that the music stops to enjoy itself in this *quintet*, and that there is some verbal repetition. Wagner himself employs music of the oratorio type in "Parsifal," and he never left out of his calculation the works of Bach and of Beethoven. It might indeed be suggested that opera and music-drama are good stepping-stones—are "studies" for oratorio; at all events it was so in Handel's case, seeing that he composed operas for twenty years before launching out upon his wondrous work in oratorio.

The form of harmonious utterance which *bel canto* composers made use of is, to say the least, not so deficient in imaginative reason and in really musical effect as some people would have us believe. Those who gravely assert the superiority of operatic over oratorio music *as music*, are victims of a mistaken notion, viz., that music is nothing if not histrionically scenic, and excitingly illustrative (photographic would, perhaps in some cases, be the better word), when wedded to words. They who neglect oratorio are never weary of telling us that there is no "real music" in it. Operatic enthusiasts claim that "real music" is an operatic monopoly. If the supreme test of music were its scenic and illustrative character, without any other characteristic, then indeed oratorio might be in bad case.

We are told that in music-drama a musical phrase must be something one might reasonably suppose a man would use were he declaiming the words as an elocutionist. This, as we said earlier in this

chapter, was Wagner's principle, and apparently there must be no cessation of verbal *cum* musical movement. But it is at least open to serious question whether this principle cannot be carried too far, so that some of the repose always inherent in music of an absolute as well as a relative character becomes lost

CHAPTER VI.

ORATORIO, ETC. (Continued).

Vocal music, sustained verbal effect, long-continued effect, constant change of text, drama and music.—Leit-motives, musical effect.—Bach "*Amore Traditore*," "Ich will den Kreuzstab, etc."—Palestrina and contrapuntists.—Modern opera enthusiast and contrapuntal oratorio.—Fugue, roulade, etc.—"*Κυματων ἀνήριθμον γέλασμα*," "the countless laughter of waves," crash of thunder, roll of thunder.—Reeves.—Calvé.—Oratorio music more absolute than that of opera, mood, drama, music, ponderous formist, perverted æsthete.—Bach.—Beethoven, founts of music.—Oratorio and operatic subjects.—Classicism and individualism in art.—Munich Glyptotek.—"Art for art's sake."—Imitations.—Robert Franz.—Essential qualities of classicism.—Individualism (true).

All men know that vocal music comes into being when there is sustained verbal effect. The moment sustained periodic effect is desired and desirable (*to sustain with periodicity is to make music*), what artistic reason is there to forbid the sustained effect being *prolonged*, even though the composer use but one word for the purpose.[1] An opera-enthusiast will say that "it retards dramatic movement"—a cry which at one time, not long ago, cropped up with the frequency of that of a parrot, and which has not yet

[1] To many a nervous, metropolitan, kaleidoscopic mind, which is constantly being turned upside down and back again, such a question would perhaps seem preposterous.

ceased. But music is music, even when there is no rapid unfolding of a tale; a fact proved by great musicians when composing to a few words, or to *one* word. There is, after all, such a thing as *musical* "dramatic movement." Modern restlessness discounts the value of *prolonged* musical effect, the mood of which need not be restless and ever-changing to suit the spirit of the age; nor is the music which has a word or syllable attached to every note necessarily superior to that which has not.

The fact that Wagner abjured, on the whole, long-sustained verbal effects, and secured scenic continuity by using a syllable or word for every note, does not necessarily prove that his music, as such, is greater than that of the great oratorio composers. Nor is the great dramatist entirely non-verbal in his musical effects, instance Brunnhilde's final- or Siegfried's death-scene in "Götterdämmerung," where there is a network of Leit-motives, every one of which bears a textual signification. Who can say that the thoughts (which carry the sense of words with them) conjured up by these Leit-motives, do not considerably help to create the effect which this wonderful music produces upon the listener. Compare this latter effect with that produced by oratorio, and who is to decide which is the greater music? No one denies the reasonableness of Leit-motives, interwoven to produce musical results, nor the benefit to music from the process. But it is folly to scout, as so many have done and still do, the power of prolonged musical effects though they have no Leit-motives to help

them. Surely no one claims that opera or music-drama holds a monopoly in the matter of sustained musical effect.

What is to be said of the works of Bach? The music of "Amore Traditore" and of "Ich will den Kreuzstab gerne tragen" (to name one of the secular and one of the sacred cantatas) is surely worthy of the respect in which all good musicians hold it. The sustained *coloratur* and contrapuntal passages, and the re-iteration of single words, all of which make up the whole of these compositions, cannot be dismissed as an artistic mistake. Deny the legitimacy of prolonged musical effect in conjunction with one word or one idea, and you deny the power of every fine solo, cadenza, and chorus ever written. Because the contrapuntists of long ago, from whose vagaries Palestrina rescued Church Music, went mad over their tricks, is that a sufficient reason why people in our day should refuse to acknowledge the reasonableness of contrapuntal oratorio?

All music is written for the sake of making an effect—to express an idea. Fugue, roulade, counterpoint, polyphony, harmony, are all means which when used rationally and artistically, produce a legitimate "effect" and express some worthy musical thought. Banish *coloratur* from vocal music and you banish a great force, as all who heard Sims Reeves sing "Every valley" could testify. Let any composer try to write an aria on a short text such as "Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill made low": without the aid of *coloratur* he

would not get very far.[1] *Fiorituri*, *coloratur*, conjoint verbal and musical thematic and contrapuntal development, are just as necessary to vocal as they are to instrumental music.

The simple truth is that roulade, cadenza, fugue, are just as legitimate for purposes of musical expression and of musical structure, as the classic idea contained in the phrase, "Kumatone anerithmon gelasma"[2] used by Æschylus in "Prometheus" is legitimate as a poetic expression. Both are derivative ideas, arising out of an artistic sensing of the situation. There is just as much "*reason*" in the one as in the other. There is neither "reason" nor "logic" in a roulade, *per se*, and it can of course be turned into a pyrotechnic display. Not a very great deal to argue about, but for all that, instant conviction in a crash, just as there is ineffable and mysterious grandeur in a roll of thunder! So indeed there was when Sims Reeves, with his *bel-canto* and musical manliness thundered his "Sound an alarm" with a *timbre* of voice which conveyed the roll of alarm and not the cooing gentleness of a timid dove. "*Post hoc*, *non propter hoc*," cries our friend, the operatic disputant. "Reeves," says he, "rose superior to Handel's music, as Calvé to Thomas's music in Hamlet." By no means! The roll of alarm could not have been

[1] Through Handel's setting of "Every valley" we feel more fully the vital significance of the text than would have been the case without verbal repetition. Each repetition offers a new aspect; so that the inner meaning becomes gradually unfolded to the desire of the human heart.

[2] "Ridentibus undis"—"the countless laughter of ocean."

heard, had there been no roulade for Reeves to sing; nor could Calvé have made the idea of a fixed state, viz., one of mental aberration, clear, had she been given no twisted, tortured *coloratur* passages to help her to make the desired impression. There was something besides emotion (in the narrow sense) in her performance, viz., temporary identification with "Ophelia" in the singer's mind.[1]

It is not too much to claim that oratorio partakes more of the character of abstract music than does opera, and, indeed, than any music with which a dramatic text is associated. If the history of composition prove anything, it proves the fact that the *music which depicts a lofty mood is eternally superior to that which illustrates restless movement and action.* And the higher the mood, the higher the music—other things being equal. A new kind of man must appear, before this position can be reversed. It would seem to be true, to speak generally, that the oratorio enthusiast will always be in danger of the ponderosity of archaic formists; while the opera enthusiast is liable to that of perverted æsthetes,[2] and is moreover apt to become the prey of artistic sensuousness. With one form to correct the other, good taste and temper in art will finally ensue. Man is more the master of the situation and of his powers

[1] It is of course open to the disputatious to say that all this amounts to an "emotion": the writer, however, holds that the "emotion" is swallowed up in the *impression*. A definite picture is the result.

[2] *I. e.*, Those who assert that art is non-moral.

when he contemplates a mood, than when he is hurried on by the force of an objective passion, which he not infrequently converts into a subjective one. On the other hand the excessive tendency toward so called realism seems in our day to degrade the language of music to the level of the passing needs of the hour, and to rob it of that inscrutability which is ever the mark of high art.

To return: the perennial founts of musical inspiration have been Bach and Beethoven, whose leanings were toward oratorio rather than opera. Apart from their abstract music, they occupied themselves with sacred and kindred subjects mostly, and their works supply musicians with a standard to this day. The enlightened listener asks that modern music shall in its degree, make the same *kind* of effect as theirs did and does, while the laggard in progress, demands that the detailed *form* of their compositions shall be imitated. The classic purity of their work is due to the fact that they were content to give a simply musical expression to their musical ideas and instincts; and when they elected to associate definite extraneous thought with music, it was always "thought" borrowed from the world of religion, or of heroic manifestations of the higher humanities. On the other hand opera has hitherto been concerned mostly with primitive excursions, *quâ* drama, into the realm of sometimes elevating, ofttimes degrading passion, which supplies human life with some of its most alluring situations. Of first rate interest to the public, its development and its music, opera can-

not be held to supersede the necessity for the cultivation of oratorio. When first-rate composers deal with lofty subjects they produce great masterpieces —pure, classic, simple, and spiritual in outlook. We should, therefore, hear the great masters, and *often*; for a regular hearing cultivates a taste akin to that of these Masters, so that musical grace becomes more and more abundant.

Some writers declare that classicism is opposed to individualism in art. If Academies do oppose a possible budding classic while he buds, they only develop his spiritual muscle. Naturally the individual must grow or the race must die; individual growth through individualism matters much, while racial through individual growth matters more; and original inspiration (the emotional impulse-maker of external origin) still more. Love of an object, exterior to individual mind, produces individualism in proportion as individual mind perceives the whole or part of that object and loves it wholly or in part. Revolt against the *form*,[1] but reverence the *spirit* of classicism. Its manner, in detail, may not matter; but its matter matters a great deal; and surely it is matter, not manner, that *makes* classicism.[2] If you want to see demented "individualism," go to that cave of Adullam—the "Secession" exhibition in Berlin, and note how "individualism" throws buckets of paint at a bit of calico, and calls it a picture. Men quarrel with authority, simply because it *is* authority—even as

[1] Provided always you can prove your own to be better.
[2] After all, is it possible to separate matter from manner?

authority quarrels with aspiration for authority, simply because it *is* aspiration. Is man something of an opportunist, perhaps? He may be, but in his sane moods he grows securely when he seeks inspiration and an object of worship outside himself. Such a man, *when at his best, i.e., at his work*, never issues a "manifesto," and, as a rule, makes those who do, look very foolish. You need not always take what a man says or writes, in words, as a true expression of his real opinion. Examine his compositions, and you will find the real man *there;* you will also find that he loves exactly the same kind of thing as his colleague, whom he has perchance condemned with tongue, loves. He will reverence the spirit which gave us Bach and Beethoven, Shakespeare and Goethe, and the sculptors of a bygone age. Why do all sane men love the works of the classic masters? Is it not because they find them to be akin to themselves, as men—as members of the same family; and in the case of composers, because they find in them kindred expression on kindred subjects?

Let a man think on the living movement and breathing dignity of those maimed relics in the Munich "Glyptotek"; on the purity of Æschylus's work; on the description given of the war-steed in the book of Job. The spirit which animates all these is the spirit of the Renaissance. You need propose no "tests;" these things claim us for their own; and we are never more true to ourselves and to individual growth, than when we fortify ourselves with a little of the spirit of men of classic mould. A far greater danger threatens

when we come under the influence of those who make modern æstheticism pure and simple—the love of what they call the sensuously beautiful [1] a "sign and manifesto to swear to." This, rather than "Classicism," is the "chaff of the Renaissance" and of every age, while the "wheat" is the classic spirit which fortunately has never entirely left music-makers in any generation.

The mischief, which produces copies instead of original paintings, creeps in when men repeat the accents or the accidents of genius. There can never be any harm done if musicians, by nurturing their powers of imagination, seek to penetrate to some of the thoughts which forced the giants to speak. These thoughts no man can learn except through the classic masters' works. There will be, to be sure, some pulling up of weeds by the roots, in order that space may be found for the spread of universal thoughts of universal minds. Robert Franz spent the greater part of his life in editing Handel and others. We are not aware that his occupation interfered with his "individual" growth. He did not sit down to write another "Messiah," nor to evolve a new *roulade;* he simply produced his miniature vocal pictures, which are—Robert Franz, and no one else, albeit they have that *something* about them which we are justified in calling the classic spirit. The fact is, that the essence of classicism is love for an idea (the outcome of faith

[1] The blue china is broken, the peacock's feathers burnt; but the robe of "non-moral art" is still being worn to cover the nakedness of modern pretence.

in a symbolic object)[1] and the preservation of true balance between the architectonic thought and the play of senses and emotions; to so direct the activities of the latter by means of the former, that men may realise the full effect of both. The healthy growth of the individual will be best secured by this spirit. Such individualism as loves other individualisms, seeing in them signs of kinship and artistic union with itself and with each other, seeing, too, their fellowship as pilgrims to Eternity, knowing no shadow of turning, but ever wrestling to reveal in itself some symbolic glimpse of the Eternal-Absolute—such individualism surely is the compelling and the restraining force in all upheavals and revivals whatsoever.

[1] We talk of the infinite in terms of the finite. This is all we can do. The term—"symbolic" suggests an object—as it appears to man, who defines it in his own terms, with finite intelligence—the only means open to him of dealing with the transcendental.

CHAPTER VII.

ORATORIO (Continued).

Singer and classic spirit, oratorio, opera singers.—Wagner and "Die Meistersinger."—Bach to Brahms.—The English school of composers.—Great art and reverence, the past and the future, oratorio subjects.—England, home of oratorio.—Plagiarism (charge of) discussed.—English musicians.—Singer's concern in foregoing, modesty, just, universal expression.—Sir New Force.—English Cathedrals, effect on oratorio singing.—Reading of Holy Writ.—Versatility, self-sacrifice.—Singer a servant of Art.

The singer's art owes a great deal to the classic spirit, which has been fostered by oratorio, and the style of singer and composer has been strongly influenced by the text. No one can doubt that the singing of sacred music has had a benign effect upon vocal art, as such; for oratorio artists seldom suffer from the same vocal vices as their operatic colleagues —experience proves this. One might even go further, and say, in regard to composers, that different subjects affect the same composers with different results, causing varying degrees of attainment in their works. One speaks with bated breath of so colossal an intellect, but is it not after all true that Richard Wagner's musical powers, as such, are more convincingly displayed in "Die Meistersinger" than in any other of his works? The theme which he musically treats

in this masterpiece is "Musical Art" and its effect upon life. The love-story is a strand in the weft and woof of the piece.

The general public has undoubtedly a deep interest in the text of musical works; its appreciation of art (a just and delicate taste in regard to it) depends upon the subjects chosen by the composer for his composition, and by the singer for performance. It is therefore disastrous when a great community neglects to delve more generally in the mines left by Bach and Beethoven, Handel and Mozart, Haydn, Mendelssohn, Brahms and the rest. And how comes it that some of the stronger productions of the modern English School pass so quickly out of sight? Surely the public most strangely misses its opportunities.

Great art cannot live, without the power—in those responsible for it—of mental absorption, nor yet without the spirit of awe and of reverence. A review of Oratorio subjects will explain the presence of this spirit, which makes itself felt when any great oratorio is performed. Whatever a man's creed or no-creed may be, he is usually grateful at one time or another if anything in the shape of entertainment make him forget himself and his material surroundings. How much greater is the boon, when we are transported to scenes that transcend in impressive power those which deal with ephemeral subjects. The things that have been in the distant past, the things that are to be, the mighty past and the still mightier future, with their inspiration for universal

mind, make harmonious echoes in the breast of man, and suspend the discord which Beethoven was fain to interrupt in the Ninth Symphony with "Nicht diese Töne!"

What are the subjects which have given us the sacred works we may include under the term "oratorio"? We shall give a fairly comprehensive list in citing: "The Passion," which Bach treated with fine charity, so that the ordinary man might join his more gifted brother in its performance; the Masses; "The Mount of Olives," "Messiah," "Samson," "Judas Maccabæus," "Israel in Egypt," Mozart's "Requiem," "Elijah," Brahms's "Requiem," "The Creation," "The Redemption" (Gounod), etc., etc., and the works of the modern English School. When approaching the subjects of such works as these, we might appropriately call to mind the attitude of the lawgiver before the burning bush. And indeed the Anglo-Saxon has treated oratorio with a respect that has repaid him in performances which have, from time to time, reached superlative excellence in this country.[1] England, often girded at but always courted, has been blamed because of her allegiance to Handel and Mendelssohn, of whom, as of other great composers, one may say that they are very fine and very final. But it is safe to prophesy that, even if we have in the past been exclusive in our worship

[1] During Madame Jenny Lind's and Mr. Sims Reeves's lives, and under Mr. Santley's influence, the English School of Oratorio performance attained to great heights. The names of eminent conductors who have furthered the work will readily occur to the mind.

of these two composers, we need feel no undue alarm. Their spirit is a spirit of truth, and as our young composers are learning to be very independent in their form, we shall not find Englishmen writing exercises in the style of Handel or Mendelssohn. It is true that no man, composer or singer, ought to be fettered by another man's form. And yet, a formful model is better than a formless one.

Now, our English school of music has often been assailed for plagiarism, because it has seen something to build upon in the musical phrases and in the terminology of *e.g.*, Handel or Mendelssohn. The truth is that counterpoint, fugue, roulade, plagal and all cadences are no more personal possessions of Handel, etc., than were the words, phrases, and even ideas which have come into use in the course of the growth of language and thought, the personal property of Shakespeare, Milton, Goethe, and the rest. The phrases, progressions, and general tonality of eminent composers may surely be used by their successors without jeopardising originality. It is the use a man makes of ideas that have passed into current thought which counts, and becomes characteristic of the man who makes it. Contrapuntal treatment, an occasional roulade, and a plagal cadence or two, do not make a copy of Handel any more than one swallow, or twenty swallows, make a summer. Take the case of a literary man, a prose writer or a poet. Words, phrases, and even ideas, pass into the currency of the literary world: this is its capital—so to speak, which it uses to carry on its work. So long as

a literary artist uses existing ideas for purposes of original expression, revealing the product of an original mind at work, he cannot be fairly accused of plagiarism. Whatsoever a man absorbs and makes part and parcel of himself, he may fairly call his own; for this is education. Nothing under the sun is new, in the sense that its life is independent of humanity's past achievements. Truth is as old as the Maker of the hills, and every true comment upon inspiring subjects is a part of Truth. *L'expression juste*, if we may apply the phrase to literary composition, is *not* a French discovery.

In like manner, a musician is free to use notes, phrases, and ideas, which have passed into the world's musical currency. If instances occur where a new composer's combination of notes tallies with combinations to be found in previous works, no man can fairly point a scornful finger at him. This ready charge of plagiarism fetters many composers; and if they find an idea—a musical idea which is at all reminiscent of any classic writer, *singing* in their heads, they, in some cases, hesitate to put it down. Gounod, in his "Redemption," reproduced quite unconsciously the melody and harmony of the root phrase in Mendelssohn's "Be thou faithful unto death." But the melody and harmony are so obvious that it is a matter of wonder that they have not occurred more frequently. To his honour, Gounod, when the chance similarity was pointed out to him, refused to alter a single note of what he had written. Very often, a superficial man makes the charge of plagi-

arism because he sees no further than the surface melody. There will always be "schools" of composition, no doubt. Man is gregarious and reverts to type; but it is unjust to accuse one man of "Wagnerism" if he choose to make use of chromatic progressions, characteristic phrases, and discords, fascinating and eloquent; and to charge another with "copying" Bach and Handel, because his mind is built on the same massive plan as theirs, and his musical terminology, fortunately reminiscent of theirs. One might as well say to a man that he talks like the Bible, meaning thereby to convey a reproach; there is certainly no better style that he can adopt than that of Holy Writ.

The English school of music has been, and is, working out its salvation in its own way. When the foibles and prejudices of the present have perished, and men judge of things as they are, there will be some delving among the works which our great men have been producing with patience, labour, unsuspected suffering, and conspicuous ability. In proportion as each man has been true to himself and has said what he wanted to say, his works will live.[1] Succeeding generations will find some food for reflection among the works which English Composers have given to the world in the last twenty years or so. What does not England owe to Corder, Cowen, Elgar, Mackenzie, Parry, Stanford, Sullivan, and to those younger men who are building a high road for themselves to the temple of art and of fame?

[1] Messrs. Novello have a fine property in perpetuity.

And now, what is the singer's concern in all this, and how is the oratorio singer affected thereby? A modest man is, of course, convinced that the terms in which oratorio composers have thought are not too old-fashioned for even a great twentieth-century mind. He knows, too, that he can get out what there is in oratorio, only by a reverential attitude toward text and music. In a small volume, one cannot do more than refer the student to the works of great composers from Bach downward, suggesting at the same time that he should carefully consider the essentials of each composer's style, so that he may discover the *man* who is in it; and he will thus realise how the composer has been musically affected by the object he has treated, and how far the music has fulfilled the composer's own aim. Any singer who would cultivate just and universal expression, must consider that growth in mental power is needful, and that he must not devote himself entirely to the romanticism of opera; although, under existing circumstances, it is wise to pass through an operatic experience. Characteristic verisimilitude cannot yet be claimed as the ruling principle in oratorio performance in our day, and, as has been said, an operatic career has its uses.

A reverential, dramatic, and spiritual singer would appear to be something of a force. Any force at once attracts opposition. Tradition and conventionality are twin brothers of giant strength if a man fear them. Tradition makes slaves and kills them. Sir New Force, let us call him so, proceeds to kill tradition

and conventionality. He finds it a hard task. "*What has been, must be; Herr X. Y. Z. has sung this particular rôle you are essaying, thus and so, for thirty years and more; you, Sir New Force must sing as he did; Herr X. Y. Z. has been good enough for us.*" Then come war, and faith, and courage, and growth —and finally peace. Herr X. Y. Z. was, and is, excellent, no doubt; also, Sir New Force knows more about his excellences than many talkers, and recognises him as a brother force, of perhaps greater and more efficient valour than himself. But, Sir New Force is here too, singing his own song, and he cannot bring himself to believe that all infinite resources whatsoever were exhausted in producing Herr X. Y. Z.

Nevertheless, it is well to hear and examine all things, and to seize upon points of artistic value; to note technique, to emulate the sincere. Fundamental principles, exemplified, help men to do good work; but the student copies no man. Garments made for some one else are generally ill-fitting and uncomfortable, and so the student will not wear them. Tradition has not exhausted all knowledge of tempi, proportion, colour, etc.; we have had some new light shed upon us, and we must use it. Tradition *plus* basic knowledge (so that there may be no fettering) we will follow; tradition *minus* such knowledge, no—not one step! And if we did yield to tradition, how quickly we should be told that we are "plagiarists" and that we are copying some one or other. Indeed, so great has been the fear of some singers lest they

should be accused of imitation, that they have gone to the extreme lengths of making their singing as unlike that of great singers as possible, by avoiding the very a.b.c. of a great singer's method. Most of our readers know that Sims Reeves and Mr. Santley [1] held, from the first, picturesque and original views concerning oratorio; and though they startled people at the beginning and were assailed, still they were hailed finally as epoch-makers. It is the way with Sir New Force. Both these great men sang on the oratorio and operatic stages—a proud and significant fact for the English school of singers. Their varied experience helped their art, for both singers had strong ideas on the subject. The "Ballad Opera" may not have soared to great musical heights, but it helped, in the case of Sims Reeves, to develop characteristic vocal art. And to a clear-headed man of strong character nothing but benefit could accrue from the performance of rôles like "The Flying Dutchman," "Valentine," and even "Zampa," in spite of its high *tessitura*. The utterance of such as have aimed at "truth of expression" is apt to seem "exaggerated" to ears that have been brought up on pretence of expression. But the charge has no backbone; it finally dies, and Sir New Force survives, and does his work until the night comes, and—after.

The Cathedrals of England have long been centres of influence, the importance of which it would be

[1] It is a curious fact that Sims Reeves and M. Jean de Reszke sang baritone to begin with, and then tenor; while Mr. Santley sang tenor, and then baritone.

difficult to exaggerate. The art of Sims Reeves and Mr. Santley helps us to duly estimate the value of ecclesiastic influence in regard to matters vocal. No one can deny the Church's effect upon the nation; we cannot separate our civil from our ecclesiastic life, and England's debt to the Church is beyond calculation; but in art the Church should permit herself to be served by the art-world, so that the debt may be made lighter. Now, a church-singer always remains a church singer.[1] Let us repeat, church singing is fairly effective in church; the platform is *not* church. There is the whole matter. Our Right Reverend Fathers are perhaps a little shy of the drama, and yet, sacred as well as secular music has its drama. Both are dramatic: each in its own way; it is vain to quarrel with Nature *as a whole*. Sacred music contains drama, which is inherent in all music, as in literature, sacred and profane.

The writer could never see why any one should read the Scriptures in the manner of an uninterested, far-away official.[2] Reading and preaching are generally made ineffective; nor could any one consent to sing as some worthy ecclesiastics read and preach. For example, "Elijah's" music ought not to be sung in the way in which our good friend Archdeacon—— used to read about him. Yet the Cleric's and the Singer's aims are identical. The people are to give heed and to consider the Prophet's character in its

[1] Cf., "What is Singing?" Chap. II., Part I.

[2] They who have interviewed *German* officials, will know what this is.

relation to universal character. The good Archdeacon desired to make the Prophet stand out, clear to the mind of his hearers; this is also the singer's wish. Most dramatic is the whole history of the "man of God," dramatic in the high sense; and therefore the reading and singing about him must not be undramatic. Conventional treatment of sacred subjects is a sort of vested interest, however; and, as all critical judgment is based on experience, any departure from accepted methods creates opposition. None of us readily consents to have a picture, which has been presented to us in a certain way for years, tampered with.

And yet, no great artist sings the same rôle twice alike in all respects.[1] The main features are identical, but the inspiration of the moment accounts for a good deal. Thinking-men grow, and new impressions, culled in travel and general reading, are imparted to their work. If fundamentals be preserved, any change in the reading of even favourite rôles, based on culture, has a right to be heard. The length to which a man may go in search of his own readings is to be decided partly by tradition (within limits, *i.e.*, in so far as it is true and sincere) and by experience. Students of speech and song gather considerable knowledge, which is indeed valuable. Divines, actors, speakers, singers, all unconsciously teach us something. The student of singing will graft the dignity, passion, and repose exemplified in song, or spoken word, on to his own conception; and will, by

[1] Nor does he sing it in the same fashion as any one else.

means of the highest technique he can command, weld the whole into a unit. The result—he need not trouble himself about. After conscientious study, having *emptied himself of himself, he may* leave the matter to work its way *from God, through him, to the people.* His song will appeal to the heart of mankind, for he will be merged in his message. A bishop once said to a young man, "*When people praise you and your sermon, you may know you have failed. When they dwell on the truth you sought to convey, you may know you have succeeded.*" A singer may paraphrase and say to himself:—"*When people praise you and your singing, know that you have failed. When they discuss the composer's message and art, know that you have succeeded.*"

Besides, an unselfish singer cannot fail; he *must* succeed.

CHAPTER VIII.

ORATORIO (Concluded).

Oratorio, drama, opera-drama.—The Christ, central figure of revelation and of art, reverence, courage, knowledge, self-effacement, concentration, oratorio songs "sing themselves," recitative, narrator.—Greek chorus, reading to time beat.—Rossini's "Stabat Mater."—Revelation the Artist's (quâ Artist) standpoint.—Independent work.

The vexed subject of "the dramatic" in oratorio [1] is still before us. It is true that sacred drama differs, in character, from profane; but nevertheless, it cannot be denied that movement, action, contrast, and climax necessarily carry drama with them, and are inherent in all sacred subjects. The singer's treatment of oratorio must, therefore, be dramatic; but it is equally true that it must be dramatic in a particular way.

Culture never leaves a man in doubt as to the character of the drama in oratorio. If he be sufficiently educated to realise that the matter is sacred,[2] and in what way, his treatment of it will be appropriate.

[1] Cf. "What is Singing?" Chap. II., Part I.

[2] This word is deeply significant. It suggests not only awe and reverence, but also the divinely passionate love which is inseparable from the idea of consecration to a noble cause, and of utter devotion to it. If the oratorio artist incorporate these thoughts in his work, his art will then be indeed great.

It will be seen, therefore, that the distinction between oratorio and operatic drama is one of subject and of treatment.

Let us proceed to consider the contents of opera and of oratorio. Operatic drama deals with mundane aspects of love, hate, fear, etc., manifested for the most part, under transitory conditions. This fairly covers the ground, if we except the "Ring of the Niebelungen," which lies midway between the human and the spiritual. The mythological atmosphere of the "Ring" demands singing of a very high order, æsthetically, intellectually, and technically. Oratorio drama, on the other hand, is concerned with the dealings of God with man; it sets Revelation in a strong light, creates (through the intervention of the composer) a sense of contrast (thus enhancing the power of the Word of God), and appeals directly to the spiritual side of man. The subject-matter of oratorio being what it is, an *artist* will discuss it with due solemnity—for his soul will be in the work. Where the soul is, there is power; and, accordingly, the reading will be strong, and full of subtle inspiration. He whose soul has grasped the true inwardness of the word "sacred"[1] will perforce have deeply educated himself. The true oratorio-artist will therefore be versed in knowledge and in wisdom, and will remember that humanity is as sacred[1] in the sight of Deity as Deity will one day be to humanity. Future art will improve,.as its content increases.

The Artist will not fail to take the loftiest view ad-

[1] Cf. note 2 on p. 219.

vanced by mankind in reference to the powers and the destiny of the human race. This is no theological contention, but an assertion that the Universal Artist must take into account all that is to be found in the historical record of man's cogitation. If he do not, he can scarcely claim that his art is either natural [1] *or universal. No phenomenon in the mental life of man can be left out of a "natural" artist's contemplation.*

Perhaps one can best emphasise the distinction between the dramatic elements in oratorio and opera by pronouncing the former to be religious and prophetic, the latter mundane and histrionic in character. The latter deals with man's attempts and struggles to secure advantages for himself or for his cause, and the former with the manner in which man realises the Immanence of God in human affairs.[2] With some such distinction before him, any singer of average brain-power will treat appropriately the musical and textual side of oratorio and opera, and this will be the easier, in that the music is stamped with the influence of the subject-matter the composer has musically treated. It is a wise thing to familiarise one's self with the circumstances which gave rise to the work, and with the composer's principles and artistic character, in so far as they are known. The intuitive faculty is capable of being educated to a fine point.

Now the Christ is, to Christendom, the central figure of Revelation, even as He is, to the world, the central figure of all the fine arts. The fountain of inspi-

[1] See definition of "natural" in "What is Singing?" Part I.
[2] These are, of course, but broad statements.

ration has been in Him. From Raphael of Urbino to Edward Burne-Jones, from Milton to Robert Browning, from Bach to Edward Elgar, all have drunk of the waters of this fountain. Again let it be said that this is an artistic and historical, not necessarily a religious, and certainly not a theological declaration; as the next page or two will prove. As the reader well knows, oratorio deals largely with the Prophecy, Conception, Birth, Life, Death, Resurrection, Ascension and Perpetual Mission of the Saviour. So much is pure fact; and the simple artist will at once observe that reverential imagination is necessary to a true and artistic method or an efficient presentation of these subjects. For unless the atmosphere, on the textual, as well as the musical, side, be reproduced, a distinct sense of discord and insincerity is at once apparent. The singer must know the Truth, Faith and Inspiration to deal valiantly with life (which is truth for him), or he cannot be sincere, harmonious, reverent. In reality an irreverent, inharmonious, insincere Artist is a contradiction in terms.

Much difficulty has been felt by composers when they would fain have placed the Sacred Person in character upon the scene; we have accordingly seen a narrator introduced, because the thought of impersonation was felt to be inadmissible. Yet, seeing that music is the fullest language of humanity, it holds within it a power of "revelation" and of "higher criticism,"[1] which is unique and valuable.

[1] It has been said that one composer has brought the Gospel down to our day by the vividness of his inspiration. This is surely the kind of "higher criticism" which most men long for.

A man, face to face with the necessity of uttering the Christ words, the very meaning of the very words (*i.e.*, the one which Christendom regards as befitting and harmonising with the highest aspirations and destiny of the human race)—a man, let us say, who is called upon to take words of such deep import within his lips, need *fear* nothing. He will draw courage from the fact that he *reverently* and truthfully approaches his task, with his mind fixed upon the mind of Christ in regard to man's destiny, and upon the record which man has kept of his teaching.[1] If we instance the phrase "*Eloi, Eloi, Lama, Sabachthani,*" uttered "with a loud voice" (as in Bach's "Passion" according to S. Matthew); and the English verson "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" which we find in Gounod's "Redemption," the reverent Artist must, when singing these words, feel a deep sense of responsibility. The solemn character of the text has, before now, made an almost overmastering effect upon a singer when called upon to utter this tremendous invocation. But the work was there to be done, the impression to be made, and with his courage in both hands, our singer probably bore himself as bravely as he could.

Given a personality emptied of itself—egotism being temporarily eliminated, and attention centred in the work—art must become beautiful and uncon-

[1] If a singer's mind be not concentrated upon the meaning of the Christ words, if he know nothing of Christ's thoughts for man nor of man's thoughts of Christ, he cannot give a "representative," or an *artistic* character to his reading of the Christ words in Oratorio.

scious; and this very unconsciousness will help to develop a singer's technical power. And indeed, technique is, in one sense, the highest offering a man can lay upon the altar of art. He who has removed sensuousness of utterance from his artistic creed, and has pinned his faith to the truth that the *sentient mind*, the faithful soul [1] of man, must sing the words; he, let it be said, will have gone some distance on his journey in art. He will have fought for the power to produce a voice, just, true, and unhampered; and with this in his possession, he will convey the words in such wise that the soul of his audience will listen, commune with itself, and be still. People, when their very souls are touched, do not clap their hands, they have something else which they can do with them,—they *may* use them to cover their faces. When technique enables a man to make an audience *think* instead of applaud, that man and his technique are of some use to the world. Concentration and unselfish realisation are the means whereby an oratorio singer can give reverential treatment to work which is concerned with Him whose Name and Person are, and have been, a power in art, the like of which mankind has never found.

It may be necessary to repeat that the means whereby the subtlest gradations of mental work are conveyed from one mind to another, are technical. All the reverence in the world, and all the spiritual exaltation, *without technique*, are powerless. The

[1] An Artist prefers the philosophy of faith to that of unbelief, because (inter alia) he can do better work while holding it.

unchanging condition of doing well, of securing artistic and all results is—work—hard, persistent, work. To the subject of technique, the writer has attended with what force he could command in his eleven chapters entitled "What is Singing?" (Part I.)

For the rest, oratorios dealing with scriptural subjects, *e.g.*, "Samson," "Judas Maccabæus," etc., etc., may safely be left to the discretion of the thoughtful artist. Christ's teaching, in manner and matter,[1] will powerfully aid any one in his efforts to portray scriptural characters.[2] By the aid of the imagination (the writer finds that the very youngest pupils are easily awakened to the fascinations of the imaginative powers) any normal brain can picture the circumstances under which the characters he portrays lived and spoke; and also those under which author and composer produced their work. "Manoah" (Handel's "Samson"), *e.g.*, should be "Manoah," full of paternal and racial love, years, and piety, *not* a twentieth century parent whose son has secured a "double first," and a thwart in the "University Eight." A singer's mind becomes subtler with every mental excursion into history, sacred or profane. All claptrap and meretricious effects will disappear, and the performance will finally be marked by an air of refined thought and of great sincerity.

[1] The oratorio student as an artist, must study that which Christ said, and realise how he said it. All this will be found in the record of his sayings, *i.e.*, the New Testament.

[2] The student will perhaps find something to help him to develop his style in the writer's chapter on that subject.

The artist as narrator in oratorio gives the text a simple musical reading, which is only possible to a voice built up on "truth of expression." The "Herald" in "Lohengrin, "*e.g.*, speaks dispassionately, as the King's mouthpiece, but with dignity and conviction. So in oratorio; in the "Redemption" the narrator must deliver the text with sonorous and simply schooled voice. He will observe musical laws and will never sacrifice the balance and swing of a phrase for the sake of an *ad captandum* effect. Oratorio arias "sing themselves," as the saying is. Let the student read aloud the text, not disjointedly, but with sustained effect, having first *silently thought it—coherently*. He must avoid jerkiness, and the clipping of the second of two quavers; he should read the words to the pitch and time-value of the notes; and, according as they rise and fall, so will his voice be raised or lowered in pitch; the character of the literary phrase will thus rest musically upon his ear, with the emphasis designed for it by the composer's brain. The notes really represent the composer's way of saying, in music, what the words convey or suggest to him. Rossini's "Stabat Mater" has often been called inapt and incongruous; why? Surely one reason is, because great vocal art has been, in general, wanting for its due performance. "Cujus Animam" and "Pro Peccatis" can be sung in such wise that Rossini's idea of the words—that of a man who knew the musical tongue pretty well—becomes apparent, *without* any of the glaring incongruity upon which such frequent comment has been made.

When singing "recitatives," the artist is permitted to exercise great freedom [1] and elasticity, except in the case of those recitatives which have horizontal movement and not the simple vertical chord for accompaniment; just as in Wagner drama, the recitatives are to be given with reference to the precise beat no less than to the literary form of the text, as Dr. Hans Richter has eloquently explained. In oratorio is to be found also a type of singing which may be said to be midway between that of narrator and impersonator. It is something equivalent to the *chorus* in Greek tragedy. A solo for example which demands impersonal treatment is "Woe unto them!" ("Elijah"), which immediately follows "Is not his word like a fire." There should be no attempt made to express personal feeling in this aria, and certainly maudlin sentimentality is entirely out of place in reference to it. The singer is ill-advised who takes the audience into her confidence, and makes feeble moan with great head-shakings over the fallen prophets of Baal. Far better is it to stand apart from the tragedy, and to make the pronouncement from a classic —even from an angelic height. Such a pronouncement would be simple but terrible—a fateful comment upon a fateful situation. The atmosphere would then be one of aloofness, dignity, and profoundly impressive power.

Oratorios should be sung, honestly, *not* mer-

[1] This freedom is frequently abused; the recitatives in "Elijah" are much stronger as Mendelssohn wrote than they are as many singers sing them.

etriciously, from the standpoint of the Scriptures. Every singer should do his own singing, and not let some one else use him and his voice.[1] A man's own brain and heart, once he has absorbed text and music, are all that he will find necessary for the best work he can do.

[1] He who consciously seeks to reproduce another singer's vocal effects, fails to do his own singing, and practically allows another man to use his voice.

CHAPTER IX.

OPERA.

'Prentice idea.—The Reformation.—Browning (Robert).—"Pictor Ignotus."—Thoughtlessness.—Close thinking.—Love of art.—'Prentice idea and *bel-canto*, vanity, storm and stress.—Civilisation.—Burke, gentlemanliness and religion.—Wagner's ground idea.—'Prentice and pattern.—Materialism and "effectiveness."—Effect of opera on singer's art.—Coming of Wagner, degenerate singing, self-assertion.—Wagner-singer.—Shakespearian actor.—Wagner the final restorer of *bel-canto* aims.—"Tristan and Isolde."—"Carmen."—"Siegfried."—Wagner's libretti and morality, extraordinary drama, extraordinary effect, not necessarily objectionable.—Singer an artist.—Plato and Wagner.—Natural selection, welfare of species, mental advance.—Opera and evolution.

We in England, as do our German friends, know something of the 'prentice idea, historically. Of old, a lad who aspired to the dignity of becoming a good workman, served his apprenticeship to a master-craftsman. Sturdy fellows those 'prentices, brave and deft in the use of the quarterstaff. Not much 'prenticeship now, and little enough of sturdiness; and as for skilled workmanship, it exists mainly as a name. Machinery has destroyed most of it; isolated examples we may find, but in general the cunning of the hand has been lost. There was a spirit of excess in the Reformation; it reformed the monasteries, with their technical schools, out of existence. Carving, illumination, and the like, are crafts we know

but little of; and the spirit of work nourished by exactness and precision, the love of and absorption in an idea, because it was their all—those simple monks —*not ours* to boast of in our day! In pre-Reformation days, the workman did not waste much time in watching the market, he devoted himself rather to the work and its completion.

Robert Browning has immortalised that "Pictor Ignotus" of whom he sings, and whose date was an early one in the sixteenth century. Assuredly, this painter had known something of the 'prentice stage. To him who reads it with understanding there is comfort in the poem for many a heartache, and a lesson to be learned, viz., the impersonal, the unselfish, the objective in art. This "Unknown Painter," who transferred an endless series of "Virgin, Babe and Saint" to the "damp walls travertine," puts some of us to the blush.[1] It is permissible to hope there are some spirits like his lurking in secret places around us; for there are but few indications of acquired learning, craftsmanship, of trained hand and eye. Perhaps we are at last awakening to the need of indulging in a little calm contemplation within cloister or fane; not many of us, however, would elect to spend a life-time in transcribing and illuminating one of the Gospels, as many a monk did in olden times, nor would we consider a life well spent in such pursuit. A practical millionaire would call the

[1] Mr. Stopford Brooke has been a little hard on him. True, he abhorred the mart and the common gaze, but he continued to paint.

man who thus "wasted" his time a fool. We are overfond of exhibitions and of public exploitations, and we verily revel in the advantages of printing and machinery; but we are slothful, and apt to hand over our troublous tasks to some one else, and to do our thinking by proxy. An average vocalist may hold it an easy task, while engaged in singing, to keep the attention fixed on each word as it comes. Well, let the attempt be made!

To think closely and to bring our thoughts to a focus, so that we are absolutely unconscious of all surroundings; to know and see mentally nothing but what we have decided to concentrate upon, that is the essence of all fine effort, in life and in Art.

We should love our "trade";[1] it ought to be everything to us. Our seven 'prentice years need not affright us, for Jacob waited twice that time for Rachel, and went on for his second spell though he had been put off at the end of the first with a prize he had not yearned for. Such a fate can never overtake him who makes up his mind that he knows what he wants in art; nay, he cannot fail to secure it, when he realises the nature of his prize.

It is more than possible that the thoroughness which was inseparable from the idea of 'prenticeship, enters largely into the character of that which came to be called *bel-canto* singing. The spirit of the time was a thorough and an exact spirit; trade was sacred, its product sacred, each man left something of him-

[1] Connoting primarily, work, usefulness, product.

self in his work—surely the sanest thing he could do if he wanted to take a delight in his occupation, and to be happy. There is but little of this kind of sanity around us now; at this moment we seem to have "run short of it." Periodically, any generation is liable to become unbalanced, and ours would seem to be no exception to this rule; nor could one in reality expect anything else, for our fate condemns us to do most of our thinking, upon the deepest questions, within reach of the clatter of Regent's Circus. But the world does not want to stop and think in peace, it prefers to think on the run; moreover, any one who does stand still, and who gives way to serious thought, woe be to him if he get into the way of the world! To betray thought in work is to provoke much buffeting; the public must be "amused," art must give way to entertainment, opera[1] is to be sung, money made, victim on victim found for the dragon. He is constantly roaring, this dragon; we must really fill his maw—and quickly. What? "The march of civilisation"! Is there not some little savagery left in it yet?

Burke said that the civilisation of Europe depended for a long while upon two great elements, Religion and Gentlemanliness. These two principles—their very selves, not their outward form, but their root ideas, would ensure general truthful activity in music. Make-believe, snobbism, and outward

[1] Allusion is here made to the sacrifice demanded of young singers for the sake of vocal "effectiveness" in so called operatic performances of all sorts.

seeming without inward spirit, have brought gentlemanliness, while cant and intolerance have brought religion, into disrepute. Snobbism should not destroy our faith in gentlemanliness, however, nor cant our love of religion.

But what has all we have been saying to do with Opera? This! The essence of religion, as of gentlemanliness, is *unselfishness*. Work this thought into the treatment of "operatic" rôles, and there is at once agreement with Wagner's ground idea, in addition to greater comity and amity upon the boards. The artist is a unit in the picture, but he is not the picture, frame and all; though this would sometimes seem to be the case. Loyalty to art and composer will help every student in his desire to spend time and trouble while qualifying himself for his rôles. This is no counsel of perfection, nor would its adoption be a work of supererogation; it is a simple necessity. TO BE A GOOD 'PRENTICE IS TO LEARN THE PROPER USE OF TOOLS, AND TO CARVE OR WEAVE WELL IS TO BE MINDFUL OF THE PATTERN WHICH CREATIVE GENIUS HAS SUPPLIED. No student, after a year or two spent in discovering how little he knows, is qualified to give worthy expression to the products of men of genius, who have devoted themselves throughout long years to the task of revealing their creative power, in compositions of stirring, significant, and profound inspiration.

Modern aims are largely material, and material effectiveness is, in the main, the goal of modern endeavour. Students of operatic music rarely begin at

the beginning of all true and safe effectiveness in operatic art, viz., *the musical whisper* in which there is *no hissing*. This is the only safe vocal idea for a student to work upon, to wit, that easy-flowing, unhissing whisper which he can convert, slowly, *without coup-de-glotte*, into audible vocal tone. After a good 'prenticeship, he may make loud tones which will also be histrionic; broad tones, which will be controlled; and then, slowly, the whole physical man will be found in the tone, controlled by the whole mental man—all the flesh governed by all the spirit.

Opera has affected the singer's art very deeply. The prominence of the position, the attractiveness of the situation, the play *plus* music and dancing, the scenery, and the footlights, have made opera more attractive than concert or oratorio. Their vocal work and environment affect most opera-singers detrimentally, and the result is unconsciously transmitted over the footlights to the singing and the non-singing public. Until Wagner appeared, the work of the operatic singer trafficked largely with the mere senses. The form was "effective," but logically unreasonable. The set form of *aria*, *duo*, *terzetto* and chorus was such as aimed at "effectiveness" at all costs.[1] Operas, throughout an extended period, lacked the homogeneity which Wagner secured by being his own librettist. Not "literature" in any sense of the word were the "books" in most of the pre-Wagner operas. The Bayreuth Master, as all

[1] Cf. The bizarre "effectiveness" of the last scene in "Aida."

men know, following out to their fullest limit the ideas of Peri, Monteverde, and Gluck in regard to melodic verisimilitude, made his dramas classic and intellectual as well as emotional. He drew upon literature, painting, poetry, and music, and welded the whole into a mighty product of genius, thus giving the world a unique creation.

This creation demands from singers mental as well as physical powers; the latter are by no means wanting, but no amount of physical stalwartness can ever counteract the insane conditions of the modern stage. Before Wagner appeared, the insincerity and unreality bred of their work had produced inevitable results upon the art of operatic singers. As time went on, vocal degeneration increased, and a serious lowering of ideals ensued. When singers could deliberately stalk down to the footlights and address ear-splitting high notes to the "gods"—in pity perhaps sparing the person whom they were supposed to address—the standard became desperately low; persons became personages, the right spirit was perverted, and the Artist became the point of observation, not the Art. The true ideal of *bel-canto* disappeared, and when the Bayreuth master called upon the vocal profession to sing his works, an opinion came to be entertained that Wagnerian singing meant inevitable vocal-destruction. Instead of acquiescing in Wagner's contention that an artist is but a unit in the scene, singers made a rebellious attempt to secure prominence for themselves at all costs. Small wonder that much shouting prevailed;

for by this time, the art of thorough, workmanlike singing was all but lost.[1]

Self-assertion is destructive (to singer and song) in Wagnerian, as it is (to actor and play) in Shakespearian drama. Wagner[2] is akin to, and devoted to, Bach and Beethoven; when singers realise what this means, a reaction must set in. It is even now begun, although there is room for regret at the unnatural bellowings which are still hailed as befitting the character-painting melodies of the Bayreuth master. These bellowings will, however, finally destroy themselves; and, as the teachings of *bel-canto* are gradually grasped once more; as the superiority of co-ordinate mental expression over sheer physical emotionalism is slowly vindicated, we shall ultimately have Wagner-singers of the type of the historic delineators of Shakespeare—a consummation devoutly to be wished. *So long as men think of, and cling to, voice, as their first care, just so long will they neglect* BRAIN.[3] The pretensions of vocal schools (Bayreuth and others) must go to the wall; and Germany must add the art of singing to her other musical excellences, so that her reproach in this connection may finally disappear. But although it be proved that singers' work in opera and drama has not hitherto produced

[1] Modern Italian singing, as compared with what we know to have been the *bel-canto* method, will show how far the standard has been further lowered since then.

[2] The master's text, even when judged as literature, may truly be described as a "fair beginning of a time" for dramatic librettists.

[3] Cultivate brain, and voice will improve.

its proper results upon vocal art, yet we may safely hold that betterment will come, and, largely through the instrumentality of the man who has wrongly been considered absolutely fatal to vocalists as such,—through Richard Wagner. His lofty ideals will prove to be loadstones, and will continue to attract the attention of earnest students.[1] A pair of true vocalists in "Tristan," *e.g.*, under a conductor who does not mistake noise for music[2] (the band occupying a sunken orchestra), have here something to attract them to the work, and something to attract folks to hear them do it.[3] It *must* come to this; singers will start with a clean slate, press and public will insist on *hearing* the words, aye, every word, and all the word, *plus* atmosphere, whatever orchestral megalomania may say; for Wagner is a classic, and the essence of vocal classicism is—words, audible, meaningful words! True rational expression, together with discipline of frenzy and noise, will finally reduce chaotic sonority to formful music. When singers learn what it was that made Mme. Calvé's "L'amour" in

[1] Such as can give us the atmosphere which Hans Richter commands when conducting "Tristan und Isolde."

[2] *Some day the strings will not be forced to "live up to" the brass, and the quality of the brass will "live down" its reproach.* Even the public ear presumes to dislike (in the concert-room) the tone of brass instruments; this may be because "the brass" is bad at times. But, even when "good" it is trying to a literary ear. English "brass" *is* very good, but, even here, that which is good may possibly be bettered. This will be when players of brass instruments employ the true singer's breath.

[3] We should all then hear less of the "essential sensuality" of "Tristan und Isolde," and more of its drama.

"Carmen,"[1] and M. Jean de Reszke's "Dass musst du nicht erfragen, das kann ich dir nicht sagen" in "Siegfried" historic and true, we shall begin to learn something of real expression.

The very aloofness, the very classicism of Wagner has supplied his critics with grounds for misrepresentation. Morality and decency, some say, have been alike outraged by his *libretti*. And yet Wagner made no Sagas, nor did he control destiny. He cast about for subjects which were highly dramatic; and the very situations which called forth quasi-righteous thunders of denunciation are those which gave him opportunity to display the working of that Hellenic *anangke*,[2] without which no drama from Sophocles to Shakespeare is considered complete. The Bayreuth master was minded to write classic dramas. He was an Olympian, although he was also a very real volcano of Romance. His romance was however elemental, and it rose out of the situation; it was never forced. The lover and his lass, the society youth and maid, contented mother, proud father, church bells, etc., etc., are of course quite desirable. But marriages do not ordinarily supply Leit-motives for drama, and we do not know that Wagner really intended to write a new "religious" sect into existence.[3] His purpose was the drama, and he needed

[1] At the end of the "Toreador's" song.

[2] The writer has endeavoured to spell so as to reproduce as nearly as he could the sound of the word.

[3] Wagner was many-sided, and it was probably a mere chance word which gave rise to the idea of his inventing a "new religion."

extraordinary situations such as he found in myths, legends, and sagas, to enable him to make musical comment upon man's destiny and the growth of his character. He merely accepted what humanity had preserved for him from the beginning. Time was his friend and treasury.

All Wagner's characters are extraordinary, and they produce extraordinary effects, musical and poetic, literary and well chosen, impersonal and suggestive of universality. *Men see and hear for the most part that which they set out for to see and hear.* We do not cry out against Sophocles because of "Œdipus Tyrannus," nor against Shakespeare because of "Macbeth," nor yet against Browning because of "Pippa Passes." These three are classics, and so, surely, is Wagner. The sooner the singer can realise this the better for his understanding of Wagnerian drama and for his singing thereof. The storm and stress which came with the Bayreuth master found singers unprepared, and there are but very rare instances of the vocalist proving equal to the occasion. Fine performances from the point of view of dramatic conception have been recorded; but the actual singing has, without any doubt, been, on the whole, inadequate. Singers who deal with the elemental and the fateful, must learn something of man's history, and of mythology, else their voices will scarcely fit the rôles which Wagner provided for them.

If the singer of opera be not impersonal in his work, *i.e.*, if he do not approach it as an *artist*, the dangers of the situation to him and to his art are

enormous. The chief of these is a distinct tendency toward dwarfing his character, and from that follows the other, viz., danger to the voice. Unless the organ be grown to maturity from the smallest beginnings (the musical whisper) there would seem to be no arresting of the vocal decay which plays havoc with singers. If, however, we deal with this disorder *mentally* we can subdue it. Plato declared speech to be the important factor in music, rhythm and melody playing subordinate parts. This statement proves that the true ancients gave to thought-in-language precedence over the mere stirring of senses and emotions, when combining words and music in one performance. That Wagner held similar views—being meanwhile fully alive to the claims of both senses and emotions—is clear from his dramas. He once made striking reply to a friend who, on being told "The Ring" was finished, asked if he might see it. His request granted, the friend exclaimed, "But there is not a note of music here"! "Oh," replied the dramatist, "*that is nothing—the music is in the words.*"

The mind can and must, through concentrated imagination, discipline singers' powers and bring them into a state of quick activity, so that their vocal technique will, finally, be found ample for the performance of Song, Oratorio, and Opera. Then, too, it will be seen that Plato and Wagner have not joined hands in vain, in regard to the supreme importance of the text. The great lesson for singers, in the whole process, from the earliest instances of the combina-

tion of words and music to the latest example of music-drama, lies in the fact that the process has been an evolution, and that it bears an educational significance.

According to the evolution theory, man's development is the result of definite forces, the chief of which is Natural-Selection. The result of this agency is the multiplication of types, as the result of the accumulation of slight physical differences. It is but rational to suppose that the ruling cause of this accumulation has been the welfare of the species.[1] Arguing from the visible to the invisible, may we not say that the same process has prevailed on the mental side of man, and mostly on that side; and also in regard to the *product* of the mental side of him? As in the case of physical types, the variant forms remain while the constant disappear, so in regard to the product of the mental side of man: the types which represented the greatest accumulation of—call them —psychic differences, and which promised best for humanity—these variant types have survived. The mental growth of the individual is the formful result of the disappearance of one constant type after another. Music and singing are, at bottom, mental or psychic functions. Nature has not been idle in regard to them. She has pursued her silent, even, course; collecting endless variations into one type, and slowly evolving music out of sounds which at first meant no more than the croaking of a raven or the chatter of an ape. Opera, in its relation to vocal

[1] See "The Destiny of Man" (John Fiske).

art, and to the development of vocal music as a means of expression, is the object of our inquiry in this and the next two chapters. The reader will see, in this connection, that the same principle, *i.e.*, the production of the highest results (in other words the securing of the greatest content) holds good in regard to any part of human mentality, as it does of the whole.

CHAPTER X.

OPERA (Continued).

Early episodical entertainments.—*Vox diastematic, continuata.*—Peri.—Growth of musical science.—Music and poetry combined, single voice, many voices, contrapuntal extravagance.—First orchestra.—Monteverde.—Florentine reform, *musica parlante*, embellishments, prima donna.—Melodic growth.—Singer's journey.—Science of music and invention.—Voices benefit.—Opera an evolution.—From Peri to Wagner.—Constant forms disappear, variant forms remain, one long rebellion of typical thought against tyranny of senses, not to elimination of latter, but to enthronement of thought and imaginative music above them.—Early ideas, musical tyranny.—Florentine reformers, one instead of many voices.—Emotionalism still rampant.—Gradual orchestral growth.—Rossini.—Verdi.—The Teuton.—Wagner, Bach-principle.—Wagner means drama, not stirring of sensuous emotion.—Characterisation.—Greek dramatists.—*Vis inertiæ*.—Opera singers in oratorio and concert.—Use of senses as pathways to the understanding.

In the earliest instances of the combination of words and music (it *was* music to those who made and, perhaps, to those who heard it), the solo voice, at this time no doubt the *vox disastematica* (held in check) attributed to the ancients by Peri in his preface to "Eurydice," was the important thing—though the twanging music of the lyre accompanied it. But Nature, when she had once conceived the idea of using words and music in combination, and had furthermore spent centuries in the improvement of the science, and in increasing the fascination of

music, proceeded to make use of the fruits of her labours. She had evolved counterpoint and harmony out of diaphony and descant, thereby enriching the science of sound, which had already absorbed the accumulation of slight differences of tone due to international [1] communication; and she began to utilise her discoveries in her delightful task of combining words and music for purposes of performance. She found that *one* voice, even when accompanied by an instrument, was tiresome and unedifying; and she, then, as now, made an effort to avoid monotony—a sound art principle—by using many voices where she had only used one before. Accordingly we find that those who discovered the germ of the operatic and musico-dramatic idea (when they combined poetry, music, and dancing for purposes of episodical entertainment) made use of their knowledge of counterpoint and harmony, by employing many voices in situations where a single voice had, at one period, been considered sufficient. But, in course of time, contrapuntal activity was carried to excess, and its victims were, by and by, landed in a maze of dry-as-dust pretence; and although counterpoint secured rich sounds and a lively sense of movement, yet it finally dawned upon the minds of the Florentine reformers, that there was something wrong in the substitution of many voices for one when the object was to secure truly dramatic, individual expression. Accordingly a return was made to first principles, and

[1] Musicians wandered a good deal in those days as they do in our own.

the solo voice came to its own again as the only true medium for conveying the idea of individual action and characterisation upon the stage. It had been ousted from its legitimate position in order that musical developments might be fully used. Musicians discovered, however, that these rich things which music had been hoarding, could be made use of in the accompaniments; and then began the departure which ultimately proved so effective in the works of Wagner. This departure was made possible by the growth of the orchestra, which in the days of Monteverde reached the respectable total of thirty-nine instruments (strings, wood, and brass complete).

The style of the single-voiced artistic utterance to which the Florentines, through Peri, gave birth, was called the "representative" style—a bid for *l'expression juste* in composition. It was eloquent and histrionic, and all dialogue was treated in this way. It was moreover accompanied; but the conversion of this "*musica parlante*" into regular *recitative and aria*, was reserved for Cavalli, the favourite pupil of Monteverde. Now Peri had records to help him—those dealing with the two modes of vocal expression in use among the ancients, which modes were, the *vox diastematica* (held in check), and the *vox continuata* (the speaking voice).[1] He, in turn, by using

[1] This *vox continuata*, was probably perpetuated in a nobler form after a lapse of one hundred and twenty years in the *Recitavo Secco* of Mozart. Singers had by this time learned how to combine the "*Vox diastematica*" and the "*Vox continuata*," with the result that they gave us Recitative—as we know it—or did.

the two, and by careful consideration of the potentially musical chacacter of ordinary Italian speech, helped to evolve the comparatively histrionic and fully sustained voices which, later on, gave glory to Italy. It was on the inflections of the *musica parlante* that he even based his harmonies. When, later on, Cavalli drew a sharp line between *recitative* and *aria*, the singer's art, as such, must have grown; and we read of singers of that day becoming so exuberant in their vocal capacity, that they introduced embellishments to relieve the "monotony" of the situation.

This was a perfectly natural instinct in the "singing bird," and justifiable, were there no intellectual reason against it, to indulge in some such embroideries as the *giri e gruppi* (flourishes and turns) with which Signora Archilei graced, or disgraced, Peri's score. Nature works slowly, and though there be some lovely melodies in the earlier examples of opera, much that was arid and uninteresting also meets the ear. Melody of an exalted kind was scarce, and so the irrepressible *prima-donna* took out a license, as is sometimes done, to kill some one else's game. Singers "took the town" even in those days and became indispensable, and took, besides, liberties with the composer's intentions.[1] All very wrong, of course. And yet, it is more than probable that many a fine roulade and cadenza was invented "under fire" so to speak. The singing instinct is a wondrous thing, and some composers have profited by it. But, it is

[1] This is done, we are credibly informed, even in our own day.

certain that the habit of irresponsibly "embellishing" composers' works went much too far.[1] Singers aimed at pyrotechnics, created a demand for them, and people flocked to listen. Good for the box-office, and bad for art!

Gradually, however, a wealth of melody ensued, until the time came when the treasures music had been garnering in her store could be used formfully and intelligently. The honest labour and thought already spent upon eloquent counterpoint must have helped to develop the ripe melodies which in Purcell's and Handel's days reached such extraordinary splendour.

And now, the student of the growth of opera and of voice sees that the singer started his journey with the use of the single voice, lost his way to the land of true personal expression (when he employed many voices though the situation only called for one), and finally reached a place where he could begin to cultivate artistic utterance. He arrived at this spot only when he began to realise whence he came, whither he was going, and what the object of his journey. As he went on he left behind him much that was useless and uninteresting, and picked up much that was useful, so that ultimately the voice became a far more glorified medium of communication than it had been when, as yet, the science of music had not really started to grow. If we examine the *typical* works that survive and which still claim the regard of musicians, we shall find most of the things that have

[1] Even for those days.

helped the singer to progress. The compositions based upon occasional utility and effectiveness, helped him as vocal exercises, and then died. It may be truly said that they were musically helpful also, for musical compositions always reap benefit from the invention of new forms and methods of expression, and voices have certainly been vastly helped, as to their management and range, by the development of the science of music, through counterpoint, harmony, and polyphony. Moreover the use of the voice in choral singing paved the way to dominion over the difficulties incident to solo singing, when at last the individual voice resumed its position,[1] and when singers found they had to deal with sustained melody, instead of that which we may justly call a musical and colloquial utterance. We said awhile ago that the history of opera has been an evolution, and that it is educational and significant.[2] Rising from the physical to the psychic, man's upward flight through every new activity (such as the music of opera) has gone on toward an ever increasing dominion over increased resources. There is a gradual ascent from Peri and Monteverde up to Wagner. The works of these two composers, and of Gluck, Mozart, Beethoven, Wagner, remain *reproductive in character and variantly typical in form.* Operatic composers whose works, however meritorious in one sense, were practically entertaining and nothing more have been set aside; while those who

[1] At the time of the Florentine Reform spoken of above.

[2] This chapter, pp. 244, 5, and Chap. IX., pp. 241–2.

secured for their work the greatest possible content command attention to-day. Why is this so? Surely the answer must be that the cosmic process has been at work, sifting and preserving whatever seems to promise well for mankind; and now, man, with whatever knowledge he possesses, gathered through universal history, decides that all that is worthy of preservation is the work in which the *outward effect is correlated to the inner and truthful workings of a comprehensive mind.*

IT IS NOT TOO MUCH TO SAY, IN VIEW OF THE WORKS OF THE COMPOSERS (OPERATIC AND DRAMATIC) ENUMERATED ABOVE, THAT THE HISTORY OF OPERA FROM PERI TO WAGNER IS THE HISTORY OF THE REBELLION OF TYPICAL OR CHARACTERISTIC THOUGHT AGAINST THE TYRANNY OF THE SENSES; NOT TO THE ELIMINATION OF THE DUE EXERCISE OF THE SENSES, BUT TO THE ENTHRONEMENT OF TYPICAL THOUGHT AND IMAGINATIVE REASON ABOVE THEM.[1]

Without a doubt, it was poetic and dramatic thought which governed vocal declamation, when ancient Assyria, Egypt, Greece, and Rome occupied themselves with such music as they could accomplish when they expressed their minds musically. The best medium for communicating the content of the mind was, however, lacking in those early days. Music had to wait for her sovereignty, and when she came into her kingdom at the end of the years, she was perhaps something of a tyrant, and forgot from time to time what the purpose of her rule in reality

[1] Cf. What is Singing? Chap. II.

was. Through the different stages of declamation, monody, polyphony, harmony, counterpoint and melody, she held sway, but ever and anon the human mind as a whole sought to re-assert its power; and when at length the Florentine reformers saw the absurdity of allowing *the many* to usurp the province of *the one* in dramatic representations which dealt with individual experience, they sent counterpoint and polyphony to the "right about" in this connection. They decided that scenic and illustrative music, to be truthful and effective, must be monodic, and they went back to Hellenic simplicity. It was only a partial rebellion however, for the senses were still very much in evidence, and the battle went to those who could arouse the passions and the emotions most effectively. This was natural perhaps, especially when we remember the general character of the Italian people. Personal vagaries were abundant in vocalists' performance, till the growth of the orchestra in effectiveness, the luxuriant development of melody, and the inclusion of turns, trills, and roulades in the scores of men like Rossini made singers' interjections redundant and superfluous. The senses and physical emotions, however, continued to be practically the sole ground of appeal on the part of composers and singers, until the climax was reached in the white-hot, passionate sensuousness of the younger Verdi.[1]

[1] This fascinating composer, later on, felt and showed the progress which was being made, and his name will always count for much in the history of opera.

The thoughtful Teuton, however, had been showing signs of coming victory in his compositions. Gluck, Mozart, Beethoven and Weber had written their strong dramatic works, and Bach and Handel had said their say in other directions, so that the constant and unobjective appeal to the senses showed signs of coming defeat. Embellishments, which the voice had formerly arrogated to itself, began to appear in the orchestra, counterpoint enriched the sonority of the music, and the "accompaniment" became richer and richer. These developments continued to expand, and at last Wagner assumed command of the forces [1] and propounded once more the theory that opera, if it was to be true in expression, must be, first and foremost, emotionally and linguistally truthful—must have a linguistic character, *i.e.*, be based on rational and imaginative utterance. To this end the solo singer must evince only such sensuousness as he could compass by means of sound vocal technique. In addition, whatever legitimate appeal could be made to the senses by the introduction of the principle of horizontal harmony into the orchestral part of musical drama, that did Wagner make use of as a means of reaching the higher qualities in the hearer's intelligence; and the same may be said in regard to the voice part. The great musical dramatist cared but little for the emotional appeal as such. With him it was a means to an end. His great idea was to set character in the making on the stage, to illustrate—nay to "represent" (in the "rep-

[1] Though he and the world may not have known it.

resentative style" beloved of the Florentines and of the Greeks before them) a scene, or a human or ultra-human being in the course, and at successive movements, of development, and to mark the path of fate.[1]

If, then, Wagner is to mean anything to modern and future singers, and we are convinced that he will mean a great deal to them, he, with others, will bring them back to pure Hellenic principles in the matter of substituting pure thought, representing movement or mood (drama in other words) for effort in the direction of arousing emotions and passions *by means of the senses*. Wagner-drama makes the senses subservient to objective thought, *i.e.*, the actor-singer, the artist, must keep his mental eye fixed upon the character he is representing. There must not be even a momentary lapse from this position. Each character is clear-cut and formful or typical; each utterance typical of that character, each action a manifestation of it. If singers therefore are to learn the lesson which Wagner taught the world, they must take their stand upon the principles which he advocated. These principles, together with his original musical genius, were the means whereby he was enabled to realise the spirit which animated the men who gave us Greek drama, and which fired its original exponents; and these same principles, together with his intuitive insight, helped him to differ-

[1] From Peri to Wagner we have a lapse of some 213 years. All this time did it take to bring the little variant idea into full operation.

entiate between the *spirit* of the Greek dramatists and the *form* in which they and their successors had expressed themselves. Mankind is forgetful of its own past and its lessons. How is the phenomenon of modern vocal-dramatic art to be explained? With so much clear indication before them in history as to the purpose of all poetic, literary, dramatic, and musical art, it is indeed strange that dramatic singers adhere to so much that might have been considered reasonable two hundred years ago, but is utterly absurd under present conditions. It is not too much to say that Wagner is being buried under this huge bulk, this inert mass of sensuous humanity. A bloodless revolution must take place. *We must make up our minds that ideas are better than instincts, and that many minds are better than one; and that when we are dealing with a creation which has some one else's mind for its essence, it is better to fix our attention upon some one else's mind than upon our own.*

For the most part, operatic singers are not of much value in the singing of Bach and of Handel. And yet why should they not be? Let the acquired thought in the brain first dominate the personality, and then their technique (evolved by the necessity of uttering that thought with appropriate atmosphere) will enable vocalists to sing opera to-day, oratorio to-morrow, and songs the day after—and to be equally effective in all three.

The result of adopting Wagner's method [1] is the substitution of truth and correlation to thought in

[1] To the singer, of course.

the voice, for merely aural, sensuous "beauty." The really beautiful technique necessary to secure truth and correlative thoughtfulness will ensure all the "beauty" which is wanted to open up the avenues of the senses, so that the depths of the hearer's understanding may be reached.

CHAPTER XI

OPERA (Concluded)

Present day vocal art and ideals.—Tone-size, "vibrant" character, "open," "closed."—Opera and disenchantments.—"Gods and goddesses."—The Doppelgänger.—Artificial artistic enjoyment, "charm," "personality," "vengeance."—Sims Reeves's dictum: artist the master, not the public; artist the servant of the public, in one sense only.—True characterisation the artist's true aim.—Mme. Calvé, M. Jean de Reszke.—"Walther."—"Hans Sachs."—Conductors and megalomania.—Heavy roles.—Purpose of music.

In view of that which stands written in the last chapter, it will be profitable to the student to note how far the vocal art of our time conforms to the higher demands of opera and drama. It can do no harm to indicate the points in operatic artists' defence, which seem to secure them least immunity from the rapier of criticism. Some of the most obvious demerits of operatic and dramatic singing are:—

1. *The sacrifice of truth of expression to size of tone.* The most prominent operatic and musico-dramatic performances are famous for sensational noises. Sound has been (and is being) poured over us in cataracts; rational appreciation has perished in the engulfing wave. A roar as of many waters has deafened us, to our utter confusion and artistic annihilation. Very difficult it is for a man to detach him-

self from his environment. Ears and minds become artistically demoralised when license is rampant, and one artistic ugliness leads to another.

There is a limit to the size of tone, if it is to be a meaningful, a "speaking" and true tone. What if actors followed singers' lead and *bellowed* Shakespeare's drama at us! The thought is horrible. "Oh, the actor has no orchestra to compete with!" *Tant mieux pour lui, tant pis pour nous!* But, full advantage has been taken of this fact, and a little more. The orchestra is not entirely to blame for what is heard. The reason of the whole thing is *megalomania* and the love of sensationalism; and, in addition, the survival of the aim which, as we have seen, operatic singers cherished in early days, viz., to *stand out* at all costs. Enough noise is made in modern opera by singers, *and a great deal more*, to drown the orchestra and destroy the value of the text as a medium of intellectual intercommunication. The orchestra is very often much too loud, but voices are oftener much louder still. If one were to try to *think*, and to get a coherent grasp of the character as the composer has drawn it, in opera or music-drama given under ordinary conditions, the task would for the most part be found an impossible one. The point of view is everything, of course. If the presentation of classic [1] musical-drama be the aim, is it possible to imagine that we can secure that presentation when the mind is confused by irrelevant *noise?* A very

[1] Let us repeat that the essence of classic music-drama is—the text.

loud voice is a snare and a delusion in Shakespeare, why is it considered the main thing in Wagner?[1] It will be said, perhaps, that the conditions are all wrong. So they are, but this does not weaken the force of that which we have advanced.

So far from being progressive, modern methods are comparatively degrading, for they appeal for the most part to the ignorant side of humanity. A great singer should not depend for effect upon awaking that barbaric sense of amazement which belongs to primeval man. Formful words and characteristic atmosphere are the essentials of drama. Even gods, in human guise, when condescending to walk the stage, should give us human language and not inhuman jargon. Brawny muscular development, and opulence of stentorian tone, appeal not to any one who has listened to the large tones of nature, in which largeness are depth, truth, reasonableness, justness. No one need be hostile to large tones *per se;* a man may sing with a noble, godlike voice, and be an artist. But there must be no sensationalism. The very moment vocal quality is vitiated, and linguistic purity, musical meaning and poetic interpretation are marred, that moment, the *raison d'etre* of the human voice, is ignored. *If any man want a standard whereby he may judge how large a tone may be, let him take the words of the text as his guide. If he cannot*

[1] Persistent, reverberatory loudness of speech in lofty drama would be severely condemned. Din, clamour, and confusion are essential to farce; but they are fatal to a serious play. Why are they the main thing in the sung word in drama?

pronounce the words as he would pronounce them were he a cultivated actor, his tone is too big.

2. The cultivation of *so called* "vibrant" tone is another error into which operatic singers, men especially, are apt to fall. Immature criticism often singles out this quality for praise. "Vibrantness" is the extreme, the mean of which is due vibration. By "vibrant" too many people mean, in reality, *vibrato*. A vibrant voice in the true sense is of course desirable; but such a voice is a very different thing to the annoying, distracting, little-souled, superficial-natured pretence which often does duty for it. A pianist once said "there is no such thing as a true standard of tone." Tone is, according to this artist, largely "a matter of taste" (the confusion of metaphor is significant). It is impossible to accept this assertion as a truth.[1] In man's evolution, the voice, the important medium of intelligent intercommunication, has been taken care of. There exists a true standard of tone, as we have seen in another part of Part I.[2] Tone, as we have pointed out, is an indication of character. We are in no doubt as to the principles which go to make a fine man; why there should be any uncertainty as to the principles underlying the production of tone, characteristic of that man? We might do worse than call tone a ready and expansive medium of characteristic expression. The ear, attuned to literary, poetic, spiritual expression, will always be distressed by that quality which is popularly called "vibrant."

[1] See Chap. VIII. [2] Cf. "What is Singing?" Chap. V., Part I.

Take, for instance, some of the situations in opera which call for incisive, truly vibrant tone, rich and sonorous, so that the desired impression may be made. In the last act of "Carmen," *e.g.*, José's voice, in order that it may convey the mad, murderous despair of the discarded lover, must be vibrant in the true sense. We have all, frequently, in this connection heard tones which were charged with the best rage the tenor was capable of, and we have occasionally been carried away by the force of the situation and by the measure of success achieved by able and well-intentioned artists. But judged dispassionately, the matter resolves itself, in too many instances, into a case of the situation dominating the man, and not the man the situation. If one criticise calmly, away from the theatre and the heat of the moment, one feels dissatisfied, however much one may admire the measure of success attending the achievement. A singer should be so schooled that after adequate rehearsal and repeated performance, he can preserve an artistic and æsthetic balance, so that the tone may be true and just in the face of the wildest upheaval of passion. Would it not be the highest kind of praise if one could say in one's study after the performance, "Oh, the pity of it all, that so fine a nature as José's should be dragged in the mire!"

The tone which would give rise to such comment would be produced by the whole man, organically, and the whole mind and body would be in it. The threatening, the despair, and the catastrophe *must*

be made clear; but the murderous threatening of a deep, strong soul, is artistically, æsthetically, and spiritually higher than that of a shallower nature or being. Too often, a man cannot express all he feels —his technique is unequal to the task. José is a soldier, a man of some breeding and dignity, possessed of gentle qualities. The terror inspired by the anger of such a man, mentally and physically expressed, *organically* manifested, would be a better thing of its kind than the mere fright which the simply brutal anger of a jealous man would cause. "Vibrant" operatic tone is too often brutal and unconvincing.

3. Then, again, we have too many singers of the "*open-tone*" *school* on the operatic and musico-dramatic stage. This type rejoices in an artificially "frank," "spontaneous," "easy production"—all in inverted commas, an' it please you, gentle reader. This manner of voice always has breaks and spots in it, and has to be treated for these spots and breaks. It is eminently easy to teach this kind of "voice-production." Find a fresh virgin voice, and in a month or two you can make such changes and produce such ready "results" and "effects" that the uninitiated applaud and cry "marvellous"! A certain kind of "breadth," a cheap, big "tone," and the power to express in a certain "open," "frank," and "manly" way (neglecting the fundamentals of the vocalist's art) are the easiest things in the world to secure. But the easy is always wrong, as the philologist teaches us with reference to the derivation of words.

The right thing costs sustained and persistent effort under the guidance of our old friend, "natural selection," which term we here use unrestrictedly to cover the ground of cosmic process.

The greatest vocal danger of the open-tone school is that which we familiarly call "the wobble." Any singer who has no deep control of breadth, and who sings with a so called fine, open, easy method, can secure a beautiful "wobble," which will show itself immediately he is "touched;" just as a Chinese china-mandarin wags his head at the slightest contact. The open-tone school is open to another objection. It always becomes blatant, rating, and scolding in its character, if the *dramatis personæ* has some denunciatory pronouncements to make. And this method of "voice-production" necessitates the carrying about of two voices, if any attempt be made to sing songs, or to sing on the concert-platform.

With such a voice as we are describing for his weapon, "The Wanderer" in "Siegfried" would turn out to be a tiresome bore of an angry "godling," aggressive, a personal fumer, strutting about, frightening dwarfs and women—until a stronger than he appears. With such a "godling" as this, the subtle comedy of Wagner's creation, the suggestion of the fate which stalks at the side of the god, and of the coming triumph of fearless faith over material resources and a shadowy *Valhalla*, are never for one moment in evidence. The chief thing would seem to be, the production of such a blare as would triumph

over a hundred instruments, and would besides wake a sense of wonder, that a poor human wind-pipe could bear such a strain. Nor could it, for any length of time. Nemesis is close at the heels of all such as would out-trombone trombones, and out-cartilage cartilage.

Surely, such a procedure as this would be going backward and not forward. In order that such a voice as we have described should be brought within the limits of probability, for the purposes of singing songs, the method would have to be entirely changed and the singer would become sugary and neurotic, unmanly and false in his expression. Ever and anon, he might shoot out an unguarded and uncontrolled note, loud and open, to try and make the thing balance, and the result would be that you would have, say, "Wotan" in a fit of anger, suddenly appearing in the guise of a poet. But a poet should be objective and impersonal, if anything, and should not, when he has fallen in love, fall to terrorising his lady-love, even in fancy; brutal frankness is out of place entirely in (let us say) "Ich grolle nicht." "Oh, but what a voice!" says the world. "Oh, but," says the discontented grumbler, not without cause, "man is the highest type (and they say there will never be any higher on this earth); and it is not wise that he should set to and cultivate noises which shall cope with those of the brute creation. He is sure to be worsted in the strife, because he is not built for it." And the "discontented grumbler" would be quite

[1] Schumann's "Dichterliebe."

right in his statement, for, *e.g.*, the lion has the exact shape for roaring and right well he does it, better indeed than any man could ever do it. It is a lion's business to roar, and a man's to sing. But to drop this loud subject, let us finish our paragraph by saying that *a singer's tone should always agree with the thinker's thought, and that ranting and bluster cannot be considered the "notes" of the gods.*

4. The *open-tone* school has its opposite—that of the *closed-tone*. As we hear them exemplified, both are gloriously wrong. Let us not be misunderstood. Open tones and closed tones are necessary, but neither kind can be accepted, especially when they are vocally inevitable, as a legitimate *type* of singing. The Germans call these two styles "light" and "dark" singing respectively. If a man adopt the "light" or "open" method (women singers lean mostly to it), he cannot vary his tone-colour to any extent. No matter how many rôles he may undertake, it will be a case of Herr X. Y. Z. *as*, or vocally pretending to be, say, "Mephistopheles," "Daland," "Leporello," or "King Henry." The rôles are different, the voice the same, "splendidly null"—"faultily faultless," if the organ be naturally a fine one. There will be no real *chiaroscuro*, and when any copious histrionic demand is made upon the singer, his vocal technique lands him on the rocks. Many a good, plain ("journeyman" one has seen him called) singer, who can wake the echoes with a "manly" voice, complains, "I cannot sing softly, all the vibration goes out of my voice when I attempt it." But

the *closed-tone* or "covered" method [1] is chiefly effective in preventing the singer from making *any* spontaneous utterance. When a singer "takes the veil" (closes his tone), and attempts to sing a phrase [2] which demands simple expression—the just tone or quality which a true actor or elocutionist would use to pronounce a simple set of words—he finds that the veil interferes with both mental vision and power of utterance. The result is a stilted, acted, studied tone which betrays none of the character of the *dramatis personæ*. The man with the "veiled" tone can in reality say nothing when he sings. He alters the formation of the words, and he can never accordingly produce the right atmosphere. For certain things, one must of course be able to veil the tone, just as one would pull out a certain stop on the organ. *But the tone must be veiled, because we choose to veil it, and not because it chooses to veil us.*

It is deplorable, but it is a fact that the atmosphere of opera, as we know it, is not conducive to the preservation of high vocal ideals. There is a theatricality about the lime-light which seems to slay all vocal sincerity at its birth.[3] Is it possible to keep up lofty ideals amid the intrigue and the apparently inevitable self-assertion necessary to save many a singer from engulfment. Many a weary cry has been heard issu-

[1] These epithets, composing a jargon to which every one adds his own meaning cannot be looked upon as possessing the rights of words which carry an exact signification.

[2] *E.g.*, "Man of God, now let my words be precious in thy sight" —to quote for the nonce a sentence out of an oratorio—"Elijah."

[3] This allusion is made purely in reference to the voice.

ing from the operatic stage. Let no one withhold the sympathy which an operatic career irresistibly calls forth. That it entails untold distress to sensitive natures has been made painfully apparent before now. Fierce feuds are by no means uncommon behind the scenes of an opera-house. And yet they play the parts of gods and goddesses there. "Tantæne animis cælestibus iræ!" Yet, all lightness apart, the life of a modern opera singer is terribly severe. In some few cases, much gold, abundant applause, and appreciation! Not much solid satisfaction in these even, when a man has to face his own company, alone, and to commune with the *Doppelgänger!* Without some extraneous pursuit in literature, poetry, painting or what not, it is impossible to escape disenchantment and deep-rooted discontent. There is but little *reality* about the whole thing, and, this sort of mental condition is not conducive to good vocal art. When a man is imprisoned within the walls of his own personality, he is not likely to be free in the matter of tone.

5. Again, certain gifted types of singers are liable to sacrifice everything to artificial and sensuous enjoyment ("artistic"). They who enjoy the possession of "charm" and of an "engaging personality" seldom fail to abandon the higher self to these dangerous possessions. By "the higher self" of an operatic artist is meant the mind as a whole, which is capable of dealing characteristically (in an objective sense) with varied subjects. "Charm" and "personality," are, really, reacting forces, and they avenge themselves on art, artists, and public.

The harper (in Goethe's "Wilhelm Meister") speaks of *wrong* as a force "*avenging itself* on the earth." The qualities we are considering, simple enough in themselves, become tyrants when men bow down and worship them, and the earth suffers because of their despotism. They breed sensationalism (an old enemy to art) which avenges itself in many ways on the singer. It narrows his views and stunts his artistic growth; limits his sphere of action and damages his voice. When a singer discovers there is a "charming" spot (as there is in many a voice) in his vocal range; and when that spot proves effective, he notes it, and puts a sign-post up in his memory, on which is inscribed the legend "Here I can let myself go." And there, for some few years, he pours forth something which he and his hearers call "tone," in great plenty. This method arouses "great" applause, and his friends cry "It was great, great, great, we tell you" ! ! ! Strange how this kind of "art" produces a sort of mental paralysis. A certain kind of emotionalism, so the scientists tell us, *is* paralysing. Nevertheless, the *tour-de-force* trick is often requisitioned, the management is glad, and the voice and artist are sorry. The voice becomes "spotty," the balance is disturbed—the balance which should characterise all voices from top to bottom; the range is curtailed, and really expressive singing becomes an impossibility. *Cantabile* effects are no longer feasible, and the wreck becomes apparent when the singer attempts anything outside the range of the usual run of "effective" operatic-ex-

cerpts, for which an indiscriminating public everlastingly craves and clamours. A jaded appetite demands strong sauces, and—we know the rest! Then again, certain little mannerisms are found lucrative. It is easy to fall a victim to the tricks of the trade. The fate of a mannerist is a sad one, and must be watched against, from the vantage ground of *sincerity of aim*. Finally the public tires of everything. "All star" casts fail to "draw houses." There is nothing more to throw to the lions; everything has been sacrificed. Truly, the vengeance of "charm," "personality," "vocal effectiveness," is complete upon those who have burnt incense in their honour. A grim retaliation!

The one thing that now remains is to begin all over again, and the first thing for the artist to do is to make up his mind that the lot of a slave is an unhappy one. Sims Reeves, to whom the world owes a good deal, once made the writer's blood tingle when he said to him:—"*Remember, the public is the servant—the slave; the artist is the master!!*" As he meant it, he was right, eternally right.[1] The public must learn that it is not the master. The people are to be served, it is true, from the point of view that they must be educated. But the mere amusing or entertaining of the general public; the producing of

[1] A good artist is ready to spend his life in the service of mankind. He will entertain and amuse his fellows, but he will refuse to be changed into a sentimentalist, or a clown. He is the servant of art, and in that service he will suffer and dare all things—even to defying the world for the sake of ideals.

smiles, tears, laughter, sobs, sighs, "*bravas*," and such like marks of approval and of lunacy—that surely is no artist's aim. Nay, rather, it is the placing of creations, reproductive, essentially living, on the stage; the delineation of character, the drawing of the painter's line, the revealing of proportionate, strong, clean character, in accordance with artistic, æsthetic, spiritual principle. That, we take it, ye "Mastersingers," is your aim! And believe, be very sure of it, that is what the people will finally thank you for!

Madame Calvé lost herself to find herself in "Carmen" and other rôles. M. Jean de Reszke held a calm, noble, and artistically unselfish attitude toward his art. Vocalist and actor, he triumphed over obstacles, and revelled in varied and typical characterisation. We may, in hope, anticipate the time when conductors, managers and public will combine to help singing-actors to produce many a "Walter von Stolzing," many a "Hans Sachs," and to demonstrate practically the fact that Wagner *did* mean his singers to be heard. He would scarcely have considered "The Ring" finished when he had written the last word of its *libretto*, if he had not thought first and foremost of and for his words, his text. The public must discipline conductors and managers who allow a hundred instrumentalists to wage unequal war against one human voice.

It is hardly a sign of sound criticism to make the signal "thumbs down" and to immolate a poor bass-singer who is worsted in combat against a conductor

having a hundred men and as many instruments at his back; especially when the gage of battle is "The Farewell and Fire Magic" (Wotan's Farewell to Brunnhilde). Yet, was the gleeful rage of a couple of critics great, when, on one occasion, the bass failed to outblare the orchestra. The conditions under which singers are called to sing in concert-rooms are lethal. What is one to do? Make inhuman noises? In certain halls, *which are large enough*, it is quite easy to make one's self heard, by means of legitimate singing in heavy music of the above kind. But, *they must be large enough*,[1] so that there may be space for the voice to get away from the instruments. In smaller halls the difficulty is, that the voice cannot disentangle itself from the mass of orchestral sound, *if* the singer be loyal to pure, atmospheric diction.

The young student must avoid heavy tragic "parts" for some years. Rôles like "The Toreador" and "Telramund" cannot be safely undertaken, except by mature singers. The vocal art has taken centuries to grow; it is a serious matter to treat it indifferently. The voice should become characteristic and histrionic *without* vocal trickery, and should grow in word-and-atmospheric-carrying-power, as the years go by. *Music grew for a rational purpose, and has ever, by true composers, been used to give point to the thought which is in the words (to their meaning), and not to obscure that thought, nor to maim those words (their meaning) in any sense whatsoever.*

[1] Albert Hall, London, for instance.

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